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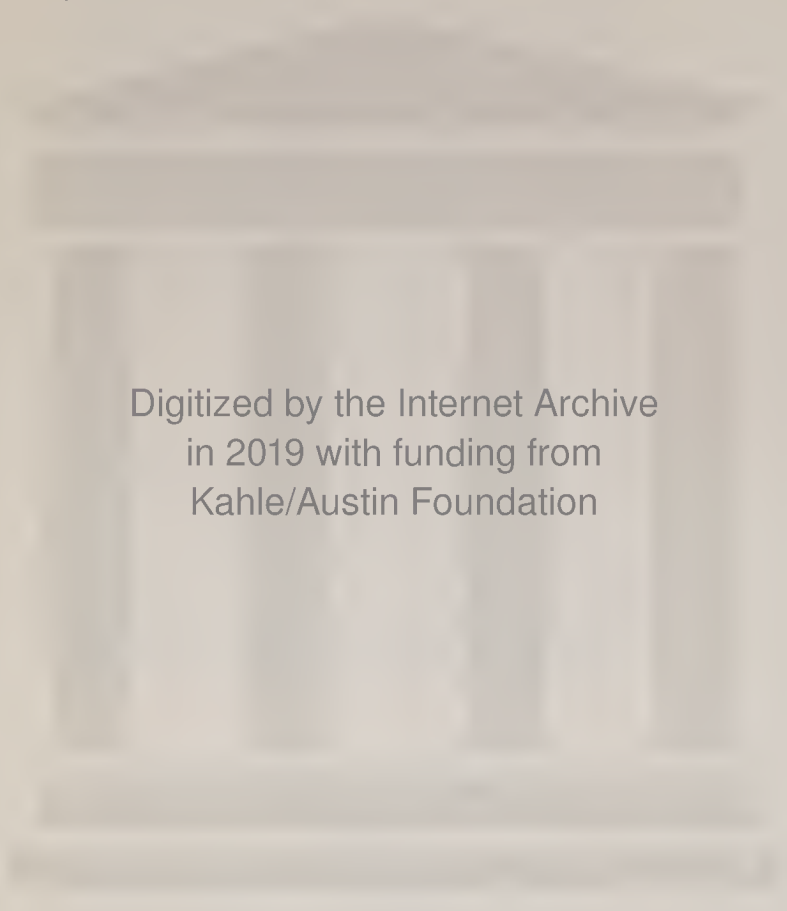


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# THE LONDON OF CHARLES DICKENS







ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH, FLEET STREET  
FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY T. S. BOYS

5-730  
**THE LONDON OF  
CHARLES DICKENS**

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE HAUNTS OF  
HIS CHARACTERS AND THE TOPOGRAPHICAL  
SETTING OF HIS NOVELS

BY  
**E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR**  
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AUTHOR OF "THE LONDON OF THACKERAY"  
"MEMORIALS OF ST JAMES'S STREET"  
ETC.

WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS

"What inexhaustible food for speculation do the  
streets of London afford."—*Sketches by Boz.*

NEW  YORK  
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

L.

Printed in Great Britain  
by The Riverside Press Limited  
Edinburgh

823  
D55zch



## FOREWORD

LAST year I published a book dealing with the London of Thackeray's novels. Owing to the popularity of Thackeray's works, and largely helped by the uniform kindness of the Reviewers, the volume had a great success. Before its actual publication an arrangement had been arrived at between my publishers and myself for the writing of a companion volume dealing with Dickens and the London of *his* characters. I saw in the idea the means of further amplifying my studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in London, in addition to reminding readers of Dickens's works of the various places in the metropolis which, whether they still remain or no, he has made immortal by connecting them with immortal figures.

It so happened that the two great contemporary novelists had each dealt with the two centuries, Thackeray having used the *scenario* of the eighteenth century as a background to *Esmond*, *The Virginians* and *Denis Duval*, while Dickens had done so in the case of *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*; the remaining novels and tales of both writers being identified with the first half of the nineteenth century. It thus occurred to me that a book on somewhat similar lines to its predecessor would prove not only an acceptable, but an almost necessary, sequel; and particularly for this reason: just as the aims and objects, the style and the general outlook on life of the two outstanding English novelists differed very materially, so their choice of environment for their puppets was, in many respects, dissimilar.

The London of Thackeray and the London of Dickens, while necessarily overlapping here and there, are marked by distinct boundaries. Henley once remarked that Thackeray wrote for those who go down into the west in broughams. Generalisations are as dangerous as loaded

## FOREWORD

firearms ; they are, too, generally but half-truths : but there is this in the critic's dictum, that it *does* indicate the trend of Thackeray's mind, and incidentally the restrictions of his topography. His London is essentially the London of the west. He is as much at sea east of Temple Bar as Brummell said *he* was east of Charing Cross. I need not labour the point, as those who know their Thackeray and, incidentally, have done me the honour of reading my earlier book, are perfectly aware of the fact.

Dickens, on the other hand, always seems out of his bearings west of King Charles's statue. True, you will find him with Sir Leicester Dedlock and Mr Merdle, with the Tite Barnacles and the Veneerings and Twemlow, in the quarters of fashion, but he comes rather as a visitor than as one who breathes the air of an easy familiarity in such parts ; just as, of course, you may find Thackeray dining with Timmins in an unfashionable quarter, or taking part in the conspiracy whose headquarters were at Bedford Row ; but he goes, one feels sure, from a club in Pall Mall, and finds himself, rather wonderingly, in regions whither his hackney-cab has conveyed him.

It thus happens that in the fiction of the two writers we get the complement not only to each other's outlook and methods, but to each other's topography and choice of environment. Just as life in both these divisions differs materially—as the habits and customs of the one are markedly alien from those of the other—so the streets, the houses, the general atmosphere, are equally unlike. Anyone studying the London of Dickens by itself would obtain but a one-sided impression of the capital and all it stood for during the two distinct periods with which he deals. The same may be said for those who alone see it through the medium of Thackeray's novels. But the two form together a thorough microcosm of the metropolis, and as such supplement each other.

If an excuse were needed by me for adding yet another book to my London series, I should find it in this conclusion ;

## FOREWORD

and I therefore advance it as the best claim I can make to the attention and forbearance of a public which I am proud to say has hitherto extended both to me in no uncertain way.

As in the case of *The London of Thackeray*, the illustrations to the present volume have been selected as at once typical of Dickens's London, and as specially interesting reminders of what the capital looked like both during the period of what may, I think, properly be termed his two historical novels, and during the later time, covered by the bulk of his work, when he himself was scouring its streets and penetrating its more hidden recesses.

E. B. C.



## NOTE

I HAVE dealt with Dickens's novels generally in the order in which they were published, with one or two exceptions. Thus I have placed *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* first, because these two stories are concerned with the eighteenth century. The rest are practically in their chronological order, although here and there this is departed from, as where I have grouped the *Christmas Books* together, and where *The Uncommercial Traveller* follows the regular novels instead of being put between *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, as it would have been had I gone by the date of its publication in book form. Under the head of *Miscellaneous Works* I have grouped the various shorter stories and sketches regardless of date of issue; but in order to guide the reader as to the period in London's history dealt with, I have affixed the date of the first publication, either in book or periodical form, to each. The absence of certain works by Dickens from those dealt with in the following pages indicates that none of them contains any allusion to London to which special reference seems necessary.

The difficulty of illustrating *The London of Charles Dickens*, where the number of plates is limited, is obvious. In most of the novels, however, there is some more or less outstanding topographical feature, and this it has been my aim to illustrate.

I have great pleasure in rendering the thanks of my publishers and of myself to Mrs Pharall, the owner of the copyright, and to Messrs John Lane Ltd., the publishers, for their kind permission to use the two beautiful lithographs by the late T. R. Way, which face Chapters XIII. and XIV.



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## INTRODUCTION

JUST as Lord Chatham is said to have known the history of England through the historical plays of Shakespeare, so there are many people who, if the truth were told, know London through the pages of Dickens's novels. No writer has so thoroughly identified himself with a single place as Dickens has with our capital. Not even is Balzac so intimately connected with Paris and its manifold intricacies as is the author of *Pickwick* with the London of the first half of the Victorian era. True, Dickens never described any single building or institution with the meticulous care with which Victor Hugo described Notre Dame. We can hardly find, except perhaps in a single instance, an exposition of London's history in any of his novels comparable with that in which Manzoni, in *I Promessi Sposi*, reproduces the annals of Milan and its neighbourhood in the seventeenth century. Unlike our own Harrison Ainsworth, an indifferent writer with a gift for Wardour Street description, he never set himself to describe the annals of any special building, and from a mere topographical point of view *The Tower of London* and *Old St Paul's*, to name but these, are far more descriptive than anything which Dickens wrote, from the *Sketches by Boz* to *Edwin Drood*. Indeed Dickens never was a topographical novelist in the sense in which so many great writers have been, from Scott to Mr Hardy. In the course of his story he often found it necessary to describe certain buildings, to recapture the atmosphere of certain districts, to detail the appearance of certain streets; but it is only quite fortuitously, as it were, that he is led into anything that can be regarded as purely topographical in intention or effect. And yet there is no novelist so closely identified with a single city as Dickens is with London. How comes this? I do not think the reason is far to seek. In the first place, although not a

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Londoner born, nor during many of his latter years a resident in London, Dickens began his literary career with a series of papers bearing specifically on various popular phases of London life and the character of its inhabitants. In the *Sketches by Boz*, his earliest published writings, he produced a number of "scenes," as he called them, connected with the metropolis. There we have the appearance and character of the streets by morning and by night; we find the shops and their keepers and customers noted with an analytical care never before brought to bear on such things. We range from Scotland Yard and Seven Dials to Astley's and Greenwich Fair. Vauxhall and Newgate and Monmouth Street are depicted with a hand that denoted the master, if not with the master-hand that was, later, to give us those scenes about the Pool of London and about Shadwell and the Docks, which illuminate *Our Mutual Friend* and *Edwin Drood*.

Dickens thus, in his earliest literary output, marked out a claim, and having done so returned to it as he thought fit and as the argument of his novels required. He was the first to do this—the first to realise the essential romance in ordinary everyday, commonplace life. The squalid had a certain appeal for him. He describes Krook's miserable shop with the same gusto as Disraeli describes Brentham with its princely atmosphere; the humble lodgings of the Doll's Dressmaker are far more to him than the haughty town-house of the Dedlocks; he is more at home, one conceives, in Rogue Riderhood's shanty than in the abodes of the Tite Barnacles.

Now this predilection might not at first seem a special reason for Dickens to become, as he has become, a sort of topographical novelist *malgré lui*. There is far more interesting topography connected with Steyne House than there is, say, with Wapping. But then with Dickens Wapping *is* Wapping; he makes no mistake about it; he permits none of his readers to make a mistake. With regard to Steyne House it is necessary to know all the possible mansions that may have stood as models for that private

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palace before you can be at all certain that you have identified it. And here we come to the essential difference between Dickens and Thackeray as literary, topographical draughtsmen, so to term them. The former, if he describes a locality, practically always speaks of it by its actual name: Twemlow lives over a livery stable in Duke Street, St James's; but Pitt Crawley resides in Great Gaunt Street. Now every Londoner knows Duke Street. He comes upon the reference with the air of one meeting an old friend. As he walks through that thoroughfare he not improbably thinks of the gentle piece of dinner furniture, and wonders if he is still bemused as to his real position among Veneering's friends. Great Gaunt Street, on the other hand, wants some finding. A reference to the Directory will be of no avail.

Innumerable instances could be quoted to prove this almost invariable difference between the methods of the two writers. Here and there, of course, cases may be quoted as exceptions to the rule—as when Dickens never quite makes clear (although one may have a shrewd guess) where Sir Leicester Dedlock lived in London; while Thackeray never by any chance makes any bones about mentioning by name his pet aversion—Baker Street. But these are exceptions, and, according to the proverb, should prove the rule. And there is another reason why Dickens's topographical expositions have taken such a hold. In nearly every case an outstanding figure is associated with them. Who thinks of Goswell Street without thinking of Mr Pickwick? The author really tells us nothing very special about Goswell Street, except that it was on Mr Pickwick's right when he looked out of the famous window, and on his left, and over the way. But as long as books are read, Pickwick and Goswell Street will be almost synonymous terms, and both will be immortal. Again, the Marshalsea is always connected in our minds with Little Dorrit. Who can forget the one who remembers (and who does not?) the fortunes of the other? As you loiter among the graves of the Temple, is



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it not Pump Court that chiefly interests you—and why? Surely because of Ruth and Tom Pinch.

As I have always maintained, even in the record of mere topography *per se*, to make it interesting, to make it memorable, to make it living, it is necessary to connect it with the human interest. Mere bricks and mortar, whitening stone and crumbling plaster, may or may not evoke enthusiasm. The antiquary will grow lyric over a relic simply because it possesses (and this is curious, for none of us ever wants to) age; the mere man will remain cold until you can associate that lifeless mass with something that has lived—with some figure that has stirred the world, or even, what is better, that has stirred our souls. Then only does it take on not merely an added significance, but an actual *aura* of indescribable charm and attraction. It was part of the wizardry of the magician to do this. An earlier wizard had ruled as potently with other attributes: knights and fair ladies, jousts and mighty feasts, crenellated battlements and mysterious dungeons, had been weapons in his armoury; and half the splendid homes of Scotland are connected with his story and made sentient by his vivifying wand. Dickens used humbler means, but not less powerful ones. A fat, middle-class, amiable, rather-choleric-at-times old gentleman takes lodgings in an unfashionable street, and that street becomes as notable as the home of Ravenswood; a poor, crippled work-girl lives in a quaint little square, and lo! the neighbourhood makes, henceforth, an appeal which few can withstand.

There is yet another reason why Dickens, more than any other, has made London his own: he embraced the whole of its manifold complexities. As he himself would be found walking, with giant strides, in all parts during the day and night, so that you might have encountered him at one moment on Hampstead Heath, and at another down Shadwell way, and at yet another in the wilds of Hammersmith, so in his books he keeps to no special quarter, and might have paraphrased a famous *mot* and exclaimed: “*All London is my province.*”

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Some writers have specialised in quarters of the city, like George Gissing for instance, who seemed to love to wallow in its misery and sordidness ; but Dickens could be (although he certainly preferred the regions east of Charing Cross) at home in all parts, and in all he has left some illuminating touch which will outlive the brick and stone of successive generations.

Practically every one of Dickens's novels has a pronounced London *motif*. He may, as in *David Copperfield*, begin his story in the relative remoteness of Suffolk, or, as in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in the cathedral city on which Trollope was later to direct his photographic intelligence ; he may even introduce us to certain characters so far away as Marseilles, as in *Little Dorrit* ; but sooner or later, generally sooner, the Wen, as Cobbett called it, looms up large and overpowering, and it is only then that we seem to get the real Dickens, the Dickens in the city of his predilection, the Dickens in the environment he loved. It is curious, however, that of all the principal novels there are but few that actually commence in the metropolis, for even in the *Sketches by Boz*, in the opening paper, "The Beadle," under the general heading of "Our Parish," might be a beadle anywhere, and the parish as easily in Shropshire as in Middlesex ; and it is only in *Pickwick*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend* that the scene opens among the urban surroundings of which their author made such frequent, and often dramatic, use. The shorter books, *The Carol*, *The Chimes*, and as being unfinished I include *Edwin Drood*, are thus initially hall-marked ; and so strong was Dickens's interest in London, so invariably telling his merest references to its streets and hostels, its public buildings and its monuments, that every one of his works (to forestall the ingenious I, of course, except the *American Notes* and *Pictures from Italy*) possesses the London air—is somehow pervaded by the metropolitan atmosphere ; so that if you are with Nickleby in Yorkshire, or with David Copperfield in Suffolk, or with the Chuzzlewits in Wiltshire, you feel you

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are but there temporarily, and that a stage-coach will soon appear to carry you, not unattended by adventure, to the throbbing heart of London.

There is one of Dickens's great novels which possesses a special London character—I mean *Bleak House*. This remarkable work, which seems to me in plot, in characterisation, and in general constructive and descriptive power its author's greatest achievement, has been, I think, unfairly treated. Brimley, a critic of undeniable acumen, fell foul of it, for some reason, on its appearance, and wrote a slashing review of it. Nine out of ten people will tell you that they do not care for it; that it is dreary, and (if they be ladies) that Esther is intolerably tiresome with her too self-conscious depreciation and her rather sly way of hinting at her general popularity—a popularity she cannot for the life of her understand. Well, I give you Esther: she does protest a bit overmuch perhaps; she *is* rather too comfortably self-denying. But allowing for such supercargo (if she can really be so described), what a number of striking merits there are in the book; what an extraordinary diversity of characters; what, for Dickens, an excellent plot is revealed. Now, although a criticism of *Bleak House* is not here necessary or called for, there is one feature in the novel which is, and that is the London element, so to phrase it. Unlike many of Dickens's books, *Bleak House* contains this element in two ways, ways which I may term the direct topographical and the atmospheric. So far as regards the former, the work is not specially differentiated from other of the novels. We have the Court of Chancery and Thavies Inn, Tom-all-Alone's and Cook's Court, described no more carefully than Golden Square is described in *Nicholas Nickleby*, or the Marshalsea in *Little Dorrit*.

But there is something in addition in *Bleak House* which is wanting in many of Dickens's other works—I mean the atmospheric element. The whole book is as characteristic of London's influence as fog is characteristic of London. The famous first chapter—one of the high-water marks of its



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writer's powers not only to describe things but to suggest them—is typical of what I mean. As is usual with Dickens, this wonderful picture of an actual London fog is a sort of allegory of the fog which once hung about legal proceedings, mystifying at once practitioners and litigants; and as such it possesses something dramatic in its intensity. But it does more than this. It gives the note to the book; it endows it with an *aura* of suggestiveness, so that you not only can never forget the actual descriptive power by which the effects are achieved, but you feel that during the whole story, which begins in London and carries one now to Lincolnshire, now to Hertfordshire, that it is London that dominates the whole canvas and impresses itself indelibly on every scene and on every character.

A great city, especially one such as our metropolis, with its wealth of memories and its many differentiating qualities, has always a special power to impress itself on the imagination. Past history, great events, and outstanding personages rise up in the memory, paving every street with romance, and surrounding every building with a halo of something like glory. We can all wax eloquent over the Abbey and the illustrious ashes it guards; no one can be quite dead to the appeal made by the Tower or St Paul's or St Bartholomew the Great. To parody Kingsley, one may safely affirm that "any *fool* sees glory in their crumbling stones." The true seer of London, however, is he who recognises romance in some little street from which all human splendour is absent; from whose stones no historic memories can be evoked; in whose precincts there is nothing legendary or artistic; but which is hallowed ground because it forms part of that great organism pulsating with the life-blood of millions, and thus, insignificant as it may appear, acting its part in the daily existence of its citizens.

More than any novelist that can be named, Dickens recognised this. He not only recognised its essential truth, he set about exploiting that truth. He found to his hand an institution here, a tiny court there, elsewhere little hitherto

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neglected streets whose very names were unknown save to those who lived or worked in them, and the hackney-cab driver (the greatest of all topographers—for is he not in such things omniscient ?) who conveyed his fare to or from them. He found, too, numberless taverns, such as perhaps few, save a Johnson or a Shenstone, had dreamed of. Of such things he discoursed as any intelligent inquirer during the years 1837 to 1870 might have discoursed. But this was but the groundwork, so to say, of his labours. It was what he himself brought that proved the alembic by which he unveiled the mysterious romance of common and ordinary things. What was or is Goswell Street ? What is there specially alluring about the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters (a fictitious name thinly masking an actual riverside tavern) ? What, to the ordinary loiterer in the Strand, is there particularly notable about the Dark Arches (which may still be seen), or to the dweller in Westminster, in Smith Square (which is being changed out of all recognition) ? But place Mr Pickwick at a window in the one ; Rogue Riderhood hanging shamefacedly about the bar of another ; little David Copperfield miserably haunting another, and Miss Jenny Wren (on her way westward to study the fashions) passing through yet another, and what a transformation scene is there. The genius of one man has illuminated for us so much that were otherwise dull and uninteresting. That flashlight has shone on all sorts of conceivable places and has shewn us something of their intrinsic value. Just as Meryon went about the Paris of his day, with his indefatigable graver, deepening shadows here, bringing out his high-lights there, until he produced not merely a corner of the great city, but a bit of romance—something in which the mind could see what the eye had not hitherto perceived—so Dickens, with his pen, has preserved for all time what so many were seeing (but without his eyes), so many noting (but without his wizard touch).

No one who has read any of Dickens's novels, even with the most ordinary care and attention, cannot, I think, but be a better London-lover than those (if there be any, which it is

## INTRODUCTION

difficult to suppose) who have never done so. The student of Dickens, whether he be a Dickens-lover or no, realises that there is hardly a street or by-way in which some one or other of his characters is not to be met. It is a wonderful company that greets one in one's perambulation through this London of dreams. The good and the bad, the beautiful and the hideous, the sane and the eccentric, and those from whom the gods have looked askance are all there. Barnaby and Hugh rush madly about a flaming city, and the red walls of burning Newgate reflect the witches' Sabbath that rages round them; Mr Jarvis Lorry passes out of Tellson's Bank, which Jerry guards on his straw-surrounded stool; a coach flashes out of the Golden Cross bearing Mr Pickwick and his friends to Rochester and adventure, while Jingle shouts warnings to take care of their heads, and points the injunction by a reference to the Holy Martyr's statue. Nearly opposite, down by the river, below the Adelphi of the Adams, a little fellow is pasting labels on bottles, or is going into a neighbouring tavern to order, with a lordly air, "a pint of the genuine stunning." That Golden Cross has other memories—of Steerforth, fine and friendly, and later of Peggotty come far from the sea to track the lost lamb of his little fold. As one wanders eastward memories grow thicker: the Temple where Tom Pinch came, and Ruth awoke to love; Cursitor Street which Mr Skimpole knew in his less artistic moments and where Coavinses had its *habitat*. Hanging Sword Alley can still be discovered; but where is Jerry and his "flopping" wife and red-haired offspring? Is that shadow down the steps by London Bridge the shadow of Nancy come to impart information for which the wretched room in Whitechapel is to ring with shrieks? East or west you may rove and the magician's ghosts are with you. In Golden Square (not so unfashionable as it is) does not Ralph Nickleby dwell, and Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederick Verisopht visit? In St Mary Axe surely the memory of the gentle Riah survives even the processes by which our great city is being gradually transformed; and Allegory habited as a Roman must still





# I

## BARNABY RUDGE (1841)

DICKENS wrote two novels which may be termed historical : not historical in the sense of Harrison Ainsworth or G. P. R. James ; not historical in the way in which Walter Scott and Dumas understood the term ; but historical in that, although the main current of the stories is concerned with the lives of fictitious characters, the background is compact of great national events, and personages of note or notoriety are introduced and made an integral portion of the plot. These two novels are *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. In the latter certain of the outstanding phases of the French Revolution of 1793 are, as we all know, part and parcel of the plot, and the story depends largely on great national events for much of its interest ; just as *Romola* does, and, to some extent, *Esmond*. In *Barnaby Rudge* a circumstance which at one moment seemed to threaten as great an upheaval in London, indeed in England itself, as the great Revolution was to compass in Paris, and in many other parts of France, forms the basic foundation on which are superimposed those fictitious characters and events forming the staple of the novel ; and when we rise from a perusal of the work the flames that devastated Newgate and destroyed Langdale's Brewery and Lord Mansfield's house almost blind us from seeing Haredale and Dolly Varden, Tappertit and Mr Chester ; and Hugh and Barnaby are, to some extent, obscured by the smoke which arose from a partially desecrated city. But, after all, such a result is but temporary, and when the uproar has died down, and the burning embers have become cold and whitened ashes, there stand out those characters which are the real mainsprings of the story, and the fiction of Dickens triumphs over the facts of history.

## THE LONDON OF CHARLES DICKENS

The book is one of tremendous contrasts—hence its essential picturesqueness. It is a masterpiece in its power of weaving personal experiences on to historical events; of making the fabric of history a background to the doings of those airy beings evolved from the master's brain. You may, or may not, like such an *olla podrida*; but those who do will probably agree that few attempts at such a species of composition have been so successful as this remarkable book; for, notwithstanding the tremendous nature of the events amid which the protagonists move, those protagonists stand out clearly defined and memorable, and each of them preserves that character which Horace, and after him every great critic, has deemed essential:

“. . . servetur ad imum  
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.”

The London of *Barnaby Rudge* is the London of the earlier part of George III.'s reign, the period covered being the years 1775 to 1780; and it is the Gordon Riots which form, as it were, the pivot of the plot and the culminating episodes of the book.

As, therefore, with Dickens's other books (except *A Tale of Two Cities*, whose dates are only slightly later) it is necessary to study a plan of the London of the earlier half of Queen Victoria's reign in order to identify lost landmarks and forgotten sites, so here we must pore over those earlier maps, Rocque's and Horwood's, or that in Harrison's *London*, which portray the city as it was during the latter half of the eighteenth century, in order to become conversant with the London of Barnaby and the rest; the London which the religious maniacs who followed Lord George Gordon (himself a conscientious maniac) did their best to destroy, and succeeded in hideously disfiguring.

The novel opens, as everyone is aware, at the Maypole, on the borders of Epping Forest, about twelve miles from the Standard, in Cornhill, in the year 1775. Epping is beyond our purview, but the Standard was that conduit which formerly

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stood where Leadenhall, Gracechurch and Bishopsgate Streets joined Cornhill. The Standard in 1775 was the one which had been set up in 1582 (for an earlier one existed, according to Stow, so far back as the days of Henry V.). It seems to have lost its use as a water-conduit about the beginning of the seventeenth century, but it remained for long afterwards a point of measurement for distances from the city, suburban milestones recording the mileage from it even down to our own day.

In former times there used to be a pillory and stocks in this thoroughfare, which also possessed its own prison, known as the Tun, standing nearly opposite No. 30 Cornhill.

It is not my intention to follow the story as it unfolds itself in the pages of *Barnaby Rudge*, except where it impinges on the London of those days, as I feel I rightly assume in the reader a knowledge of the book and its incidents. One may then, without apology I hope, skip to Chapter IV., which will land us in the Clerkenwell district, where Gabriel Varden had his home and shop. In those days Clerkenwell was on the outskirts of London, not far north of its Green, being open fields where the New River Head stood roughly between Sadler's Wells and Bagnigge Wells; and the New Jail (mentioned in Chapter LXVI.) overlooked the country. To-day Clerkenwell is pretty nearly in the middle of London!—a fact which, better than anything, reveals the then exiguous outlines of the city as compared with its present unwieldy proportions, and shows what enormous building development has taken place within the hundred odd years since Sim Tappertit set the grindstone in motion in Varden's forge. But let Dickens speak for himself in this connection:

“At this time a very large part of what is London now had no existence. Even in the brains of the wildest speculators there had sprung up no long rows of streets connecting Highgate with Whitechapel, no assemblages of palaces in the swampy levels, nor little cities in the open fields. Although

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this part of town was then, as now, parcelled out in streets and plentifully peopled, it wore a different aspect. There were gardens to many of the houses, and trees by the pavement side ; with an air of freshness breathing up and down, which in these days would be sought in vain. Fields were nigh at hand, through which the New River took its winding course, and where there was merry hay-making in the summer time. Nature was not so far removed or hard to get at as in these days ; and although there were busy trades in Clerkenwell, and working jewellers by scores, it was a purer place, with farm-houses nearer to it than many modern Londoners would readily believe, and lovers' walks at no great distance, which turned into squalid courts, long before the lovers of this age were born, or, as the phrase goes, thought of."

We know that Varden's house bore the sign of a golden key, and that it was a modest dwelling, "not over newly-fashioned, not very straight, not large, not tall . . . but that there was not a neater, more scrupulously tidy home in Clerkenwell, in London, in England." Where exactly it was situated, however, we shall, I suppose, never know. The site of the Carlisle House mentioned by Varden, as being the scene of a masquerade at which Miss Emma was present, is, on the other hand, well known ; for it was none other than the famous assembly room kept by the notorious Mrs Cornelys from 1763 to 1778, which was pulled down about 1803, and on the site of whose ball-room (which enters so largely into the social annals of the eighteenth century) St Patrick's Roman Catholic Chapel now stands.<sup>1</sup>

We can accompany Gabriel in his walk to a by-street in Southwark, not far from London Bridge, to visit Barnaby's mother, in whose house young Chester is lying after he has been robbed and wounded ; but it is as impossible to identify it as it was that of Gabriel himself. Nor are we on surer ground with that "ill-favoured pit" in which the 'Prentice Knights, of whom Sim Tappertit was the head and front,

<sup>1</sup> See, for a full account of the place, the author's *Squares of London*.



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were wont to congregate. All we can do is to follow that youthful desperado "into one of the narrowest streets which then diverged from Barbican," and thence into "an alley, where a low-browed doorway led into a blind court or yard, profoundly dark, unpaved, and reeking with stagnant odours ; stopping at a house from whose defaced and rotten front the rude effigy of a bottle swung," and so into the cellar where the "conspirators" were gathered awaiting their chief, and where the initiation of a novice—Mark Gilbert—takes place.

One may pause a moment to note that this recruit was an apprentice of one Thomas Curzon of the Golden Fleece,<sup>1</sup> Aldgate (duly denounced), and that amid many fuliginous schemes Temple Bar was specially excluded from destruction, as being "strictly constitutional and always to be approached with reverence."

One of the denounced and proscribed by 'prentices was Joe Willet, and with him we visit the next London site mentioned in *Barnaby Rudge*. For when he rides to London, on his father's business, he first calls at a certain vintner's cellars in Thames Street, then dines at the Black Lion, Whitechapel (again fictitious), before going on to Varden's house for a sight of Dolly's bright eyes.

In Chapter XVI. Dickens takes occasion to give us a bird's-eye view of the London of the period, and I cannot do better than quote the passage (a long one, but the reader will hardly complain of that) at length :

"A series of pictures representing the streets of London in the night, even at the comparatively recent date of this tale, would present to the eye something so very different in character from the reality which is witnessed in these times, that it would be difficult for the beholder to recognise his most familiar walks in the altered aspect of little more than half a century ago.

<sup>1</sup> I cannot identify this ; it was probably fictitious. There were, however, "Fleece" taverns near St James's, and in York Street, Covent Garden, in the seventeenth century.

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“They were, one and all, from the broadest and best to the narrowest and least frequented, very dark. The oil and cotton lamps, though regularly trimmed twice or thrice in the long winter nights, burnt feebly at the best ; and at a late hour, when they were unassisted by the lamps and candles in the shops, cast but a narrow track of doubtful light upon the footway, leaving the projecting doors and house-fronts in the deepest gloom. Many of the courts and lanes were left in total darkness ; those of the meaner sort, where one glimmering light twinkled for a score of houses, being favoured in no slight degree. Even in these places the inhabitants had often good reason for extinguishing their lamp as soon as it was lighted ; and the watch being utterly inefficient and powerless to prevent them, they did so at their pleasure. Thus, in the lightest thoroughfares, there was at every turn some obscure and dangerous spot whither a thief might fly for shelter, and few would care to follow ; and the city being belted round by fields, green lanes, waste grounds and lonely roads, dividing it at that time from the suburbs that have joined it since, escape, even where the pursuit was hot, was rendered easy.

“It was no wonder that with these favouring circumstances in full and constant operation, street robberies, often accompanied by cruel wounds, and not unfrequently by loss of life, should have been of nightly occurrence in the very heart of London, or that quiet folks should have had great dread of traversing its streets after the shops were closed. It was not unusual for those who wended home alone at midnight to keep the middle of the road, the better to guard against surprise from lurking footpads ; few would venture to repair at a late hour to Kentish Town or Hampstead, or even to Kensington or Chelsea, unarmed and unattended ; while he who had been loudest and most valiant at the supper-table or the tavern, and had but a mile or so to go, was glad to fee a link-boy to escort him home.

“There were many other characteristics—not quite so disagreeable—about the thoroughfares of London then, with

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which they had been long familiar. Some of the shops, especially those to the eastward of Temple Bar, still adhered to the old practice of hanging out a sign ; and the creaking and swinging of these boards in their iron frames on windy nights formed a strange and mournful concert for the ears of those who lay awake in bed or hurried through the streets. Long stands of hackney-chairs and groups of chairmen, compared with whom the coachmen of our day are gentle and polite, obstructed the way and filled the air with clamour ; night-cellars, indicated by a little stream of light crossing the pavement, and stretching out half-way into the road, and by the stifled roar of voices from below, yawned for the reception and entertainment of the most abandoned of both sexes ; under every shed and bulk small groups of link-boys gamed away the earnings of the day ; or one more weary than the rest gave way to sleep, and let the fragment of his torch fall hissing on the puddled ground.

“Then there was the watch with staff and lanthorn crying the hour and the kind of weather ; and those who woke up at his voice and turned them round in bed were glad to hear it rained, or snowed, or blew, or froze, for very comfort’s sake. The solitary passenger was startled by the chairmen’s cry of “By your leave there !” as two came trotting past him with their empty vehicle—carried backwards to show its being disengaged—and hurried to the nearest stand. Many a private chair too, inclosing some fine lady, monstrously hooped and furbelowed, and preceded by running-footmen bearing flambeaux—for which extinguishers are yet suspended before the doors of a few houses of the better sort—made the way gay and light as it danced along, and darker and more dismal when it had passed. It was not unusual for these running gentry, who carried it with a very high hand, to quarrel in the servants’ hall while waiting for their masters and mistresses ; and, falling to blows either there or in the street without, to strew the place of skirmish with hair-powder, fragments of bag-wigs, and scattered nose-gays. Gaming, the vice which ran so high among all classes (the



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fashion being of course set by the upper), was generally the cause of these disputes ; for cards and dice were as openly used, and worked as much mischief, and yielded as much excitement below stairs, as above. While incidents like these, arising out of drums and masquerades and parties at quadrille, were passing at the West End of the town, heavy stage-coaches and scarce heavier waggons were lumbering slowly towards the city, the coachman, guard, and passengers, armed to the teeth, and the coach—a day or so, perhaps, behind its time, but that was nothing—despoiled by highwaymen ; who made no scruple to attack, alone and single-handed, a whole caravan of goods and men, and sometimes shot a passenger or two and were sometimes shot themselves, just as the case might be. On the morrow, rumours of this new act of daring on the road yielded matter for a few hours' conversation through the town, and a Public Progress of some fine gentleman (half drunk) to Tyburn, dressed in the newest fashion and damning the Ordinary with unspeakable gallantry and grace, furnished to the populace at once a pleasant excitement and a wholesome and profound example."

We need not follow the mysterious man (really Barnaby's father) who wanders amid such scenes as these, crossing London Bridge, and plunging into the backways, lanes and courts between Cornhill and Smithfield—"in order to lose himself among their windings, and baffle pursuit, if anyone were dogging his steps." Let us rather look at Mr Chester as he reclines on his sofa in his rooms in the Temple, where he has that pregnant interview with Hugh, whose mother they hanged at Tyburn. Those chambers no longer exist, although the Paper Buildings in which they were situated still survive in name, and in a very different structure. It is rather curious that Selden, who once lived here, records in his *Table Talk* how on one occasion "a person of quality came to my chambers in the Temple and told me he had two devils in his head." Hugh had many, as Mr Chester was to find out. But the structure which Selden knew was destroyed in the Great

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Fire ; those which Mr Chester inhabited at No. 3, it has been suggested, were likewise burnt down in the conflagration which occurred in the Temple in 1838, the present Paper Buildings being subsequently erected in the ugly style in which we know them. We can still be with Mr Chester (although the sooner we get rid of his company the better) when he goes from visiting Mrs Varden, to that “noted coffee-house in Covent Garden, where he sat long over a late dinner, entertaining himself exceedingly with the whimsical recollections of his recent proceedings.” This coffee-house I imagine either to have been the Piazza—or “the Great Piazza Coffee-room,” as it is described in the *Public Advertiser* for 1756, where Sheridan was later to be a constant *habitué*—or the Bedford Coffee-house, so famous that its *Memoirs* were published, and ran into two editions—1751 and 1763—a great resort of Fielding and Dr Arne and Murphy, and a favourite with Foote. There were other such places at this period in Covent Garden, but one of these two seems likely to have been the chosen of Mr Chester.

By the time we reach Chapter XXXIII. five years have elapsed, as we are specifically told that it was now the year 1780 ; and we are before long introduced to Lord George Gordon and Gashford and Grueby, on their way to London, stopping at the Maypole. The next morning they proceeded on their journey, and arriving on the outskirts of the city, “rode the whole length of Whitechapel, Leadenhall Street, and Cheapside, and into St Paul’s Churchyard. Arriving close to the cathedral, Lord George halted ; spoke to Gashford ; and looking upward at its lofty dome, shook his head, as though he said ‘The Church in Danger !’ Then to be sure, the bystanders stretched their throats indeed ; and he went on again with mighty acclamations from the mob, and lower bows than ever. So along the Strand, up Swallow Street, into the Oxford Road, and thence to his house in Welbeck Street, near Cavendish Square, whither he was attended by a few dozen idlers ; of whom he took leave

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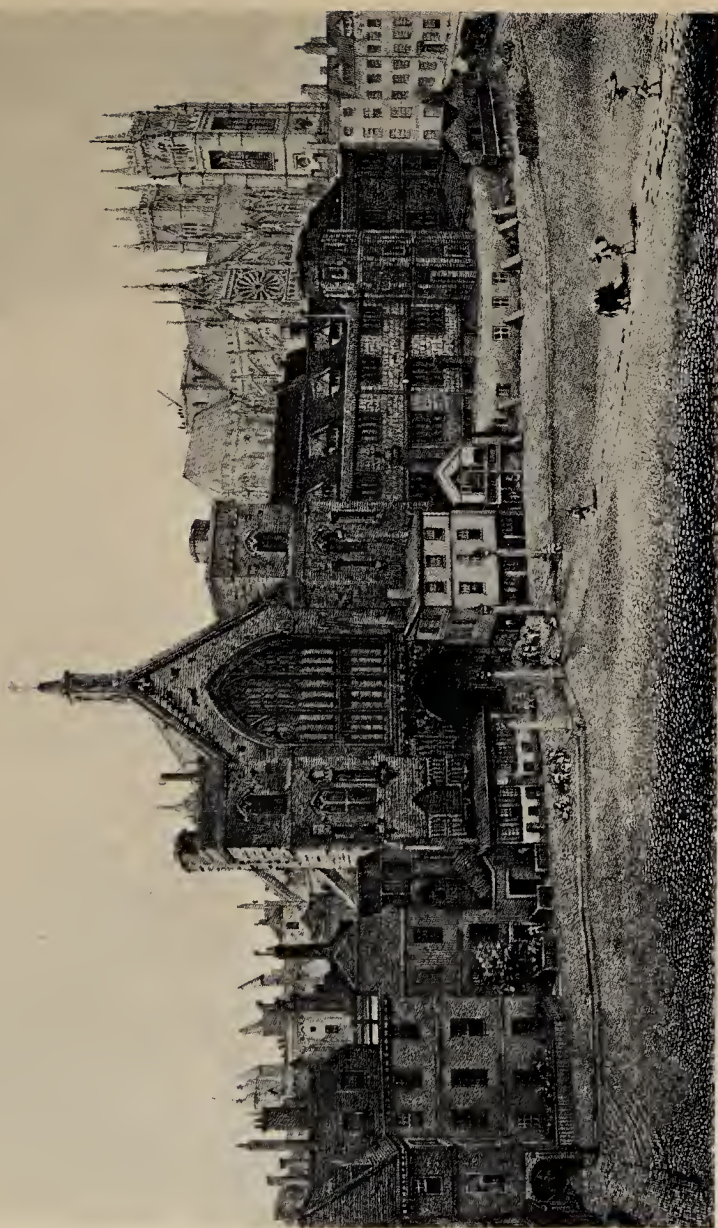
on the steps with this brief parting, ‘Gentlemen, No Popery. Good day. God bless you.’ This, being rather a shorter address than they expected, was received with some displeasure, and cries of ‘A speech! a speech!’ which might have been complied with, but that John Grueby, making a mad charge upon them with all three horses, on his way to the stables, caused them to disperse into the adjoining fields, where they presently fell to pitch and toss, chuck-farthing, odd or even, dog-fighting, and other Protestant recreations.”

While the cry of “No Popery” is echoing through London from thousands of hoarse and parrot-like throats, Hugh, one of the ringleaders, after drinking in the company of Sim Tappertit and other choice spirits, puts his head under a pump close by St Dunstan’s Church, in Fleet Street, and when the giants strike the hour, hurries across the road and knocks at Middle Temple Gate preparatory to seeking another interview with the tenant of Paper Buildings, now transformed into Sir John Chester, M.P.

But there is activity among others than those plotting, in the name of religion, the destruction of life and property, and the Royal East London Volunteers are hard at work drilling, with a period of recreation by the Chelsea Bun-house, whither they march in glittering order, and regale themselves at the adjacent taverns, Serjeant Varden bearing a conspicuous share in the proceedings.

That Bun-house, “the old original,” as it was called, was known to Swift, who records buying “a rare bun” there, in his *Journal to Stella* (1711). In the days of its greatness it was kept by one Richard Hand, and in a contemporary print is described as “Richard Hand’s Bun House.” It was taken down in 1839, and its site, at the bottom of Jews Row, near the Compasses, has now long forgotten it in a new transformation, only surviving, indeed, in the name of Bun House Row, a small turning out of Union Street which runs into Queen’s Road, Pimlico, almost opposite the north end of Chelsea Barracks.





WESTMINSTER HALL  
FROM AN ETCHING BY BRYANT





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In the following chapter (XLIII.) we encounter Mr Haredale coming on his accustomed road along the river bank, "intending to pass through Westminster Hall into Palace Yard, and there take boat to London Bridge." He found various knots of people in the old Hall, "some few looking upward at its noble ceiling, and at the rays of evening light . . . which streamed in aslant through its small windows." In those days Westminster Hall was a haunt for loiterers, and still the house of Justice in those small courts which Sir John Soane added to the west side, where Chancery, Queen's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer cases were heard, until the opening of the Strand Law Courts in 1882. Here, only four years before Mr Haredale's visit, the Duchess of Kingston had been tried for bigamy, and here, eight years later, Warren Hastings stood for the first time to answer those charges the investigation of which occupied no fewer than eight years. In J. T. Smith's *Antiquities of Westminster* may be seen a ground plan showing the position of the various buildings then adjoining Westminster Hall, before Barry's wondrous pile swept them away and incorporated Rufus's Roaring Hall into the new Palace of Westminster. The accompanying view of the frontage will also show what the place looked like with its great entrance flanked by picturesque old houses, when the Gordon Rioters surged around it and threatened the lives of our legislators.

It was here on the steps of the entrance that the encounter between Mr Haredale and Sir John Chester took place, and the former made his accusation against Gashford to Lord George Gordon himself. At the close of that incident Gashford, who had not come off scathless, follows Hugh and Dennis, the Hangman, as they proceed up Parliament Street (the narrow thoroughfare at the end of Whitehall, now widened out and wholly altered), past St Martin's Church (whose immediate surroundings are now hardly less changed) to Tottenham Court Road, "at the back of which, upon the western side, was then a place called Green Lanes."

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“This,” says Dickens, “was a retired spot, not of the choicest kind, leading into the fields. Great heaps of ashes; stagnant pools, overgrown with rank grass and duckweed; broken turnstiles; and the upright posts of palings long since carried off for firewood, which menaced all heedless walkers with their jagged and rusty nails, were the leading features of the landscape; while here and there a donkey, or a ragged horse, tethered to a stake and cropping off a wretched meal from the coarse stunted turf, were quite in keeping with the scene, and would have suggested (if the houses had not done so sufficiently of themselves) how very poor the people were who lived in the crazy huts adjacent, and how foolhardy it might prove for one who carried money, or wore decent clothes, to walk that way alone, unless by daylight.”

Green Lanes actually ran more or less on the lines of the present Cleveland Street, in which thoroughfare and its environs it is difficult to realise a locality such as is indicated by the foregoing description.

When Barnaby and his mother came to London, Dickens is particular in specifying the actual date of their arrival at the foot of Westminster Bridge<sup>1</sup>—*i.e.* Friday, 2nd June 1780. There is a reason for this, it being in fact the day of the great meeting in St George’s Fields, Southwark, at which Lord George Gordon addressed the vast mob which had been marshalled in three divisions, one crossing London Bridge; a second, Blackfriars Bridge; and a third, preceded by Gordon’s coach, by Westminster Bridge. There is no need here to expatiate on the happenings of that memorable day, for they are set forth in Chapter XLVIII. of *Barnaby Rudge*, and are indeed a part of the history of London and of the

<sup>1</sup> This was the bridge constructed by Labeyle, and first opened in 1750—the bridge on which Wordsworth was to write his famous sonnet, and which was replaced by the present structure, completed and formally opened on 24th May 1862, at four o’clock in the morning, “that being the day and hour on which Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, was born in 1819.”

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country. The objective of the rioters was Westminster Hall, their special vengeance being directed against the peers. We all know how the Archbishop of York and Lord Bathurst, President of the Council, were dragged from their carriages and severely hustled ; how Lord Mansfield's equipage was smashed, and how he himself narrowly escaped with his life ; how the Bishops of Lichfield and Lincoln would almost certainly have been murdered had they not succeeded in gaining the shelter of Mr Atkinson the Attorney's house ; how many members of the Upper House with difficulty, and covered with mud and blood, contrived to reach the sanctuary of the Chamber.

The following chapters, while introducing some of the fictitious characters of the story—such as Hugh and Tappertit, Dennis and Gashford—as protagonists, form really a vivid word-picture of the terrible doings of a furious mob directed by a mad leader. The main object of the rioters was destruction ; the intention of the half-witted creature who led them was punishment of every conspicuous supporter of the Catholic Relief Bill ; and it is safe to say that of the members of the Protestant Association, very few had the single object of defending a certain form of religion which they honestly thought was in danger of annihilation.

It was not unnatural that certain centres of Romish worship should be pointed out by the leaders for destruction ; it was not less unnatural that a mob largely composed of the lowest elements of London's population should be more than ready to destroy anything in any cause, or, for the matter of that, without any cause. Of the places of this character which were at that time outstanding were the Romish chapels in Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in Warwick Street, Golden Square. Hitherto the doings of the rabble had been more or less fortuitous, but in the course of a few days their number increased by leaps and bounds ; and as nothing catches on like licence, they had by the following Sunday become so maddened by the agitation, fortified by drink,



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that they went to the work of destruction with a systematic villainy which is appalling to read of, and which for the wretched victims must have been perfectly fiendish. For upwards of a week the whole of the metropolis was at the mercy of the rioters, and Hugh and his misguided companion, Barnaby, were to be seen wherever the mob was thickest and the uproar greatest, wildly leading on their companions, with faces red from the reflected glow of burning buildings, and with limbs trembling through the excess of passionate ardour.

In Moorfields the chapel and schools were quickly demolished ; in Charles Square, Hoxton, the schools met a like fate ; and only the presence of the Guards prevented the already half-destroyed residences of the Roman Catholic ambassadors from being razed to the ground. The guns which heralded the dawn of the King's birthday—4th June—from the Tower, fired their salvos over a partially smouldering city. Private houses, if by any chance they were thought to harbour Papists, were gutted, and in a few hours those of Mr Rainsforth in Stanhope Street, of Mr Maberly in Little Queen Street, and of Sir George Savile in Leicester Fields were in flames. The Duke Street Chapel, to which reference has been made, was on the south side of the thoroughfare, and was dedicated to SS. Anselm and Cecilia. It was subsequently rebuilt, and in the new edifice Fanny Burney was married to General D'Arblay. As Duke Street was subsequently renamed Sardinia Street (1878), the place came to be known as the Sardinia Street Chapel. The other Romish place of worship, in Warwick Street, was at the time of the riots the chapel attached to the Bavarian Embassy ; in its rebuilt form it was known as the Church of the Assumption. Although Savile House had been one of the first objectives of the rioters, perhaps because of that—their destructiveness not yet being wholly systematised—it was not actually destroyed, although greatly damaged. According to Walpole, the iron railings torn from its front formed the chief weapons of the rioters. The residence stood next to

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Leicester House, on the north side of the square, contiguous to the site of the Empire Theatre.

Besides the chapels mentioned, there were others at Wapping and in Smithfield to which the rabble turned their burning attention; but it was such places as Langdale's Brewery, which stood next to Barnard's Inn, in Holborn, and Lord Mansfield's house, at the north-east corner of Bloomsbury Square, that were reserved for the most atrocious treatment. The account of the attack on the former will be found in Chapter LXVII.: the place is there described as "the vintner's house," and the way out by which the owner and Mr Haredale made their escape, is said to have been in Fetter Lane. In Horwood's map the premises are shown with the garden of Barnard's Inn behind them. The narrative of the onslaught on the latter, in the preceding chapter, is given in the form of a report on the events of the day made to the vintner and Mr Haredale. The tale of the scouts was as follows:—

"That the mob gathering round Lord Mansfield's house, had called on those within to open the door, and receiving no reply (for Lord and Lady Mansfield were at that moment escaping by the backway), forced an entrance according to their usual custom. That they then began to demolish it with great fury, and setting fire to it in several parts, involved in a common ruin the whole of the costly furniture, the plate and jewels, a beautiful gallery of pictures, the rarest collection of manuscripts ever possessed by any one private person in the world, and, worse than all, because nothing could replace this loss, the great Law Library, on almost every page of which were notes in the judge's own hand, of inestimable value—being the results of the study and experience of his whole life. That while they were howling and exulting round the fire, a troop of soldiers, with a magistrate among them, came up, and being too late (for the mischief was by that time done), began to disperse the crowd. That the Riot Act being read, and the crowd still resisting, the soldiers received orders to fire, and levelling their muskets shot dead at the

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first discharge six men and a woman, and wounded many persons ; and loading again directly, fired another volley, but over the people's heads it was supposed, as none were seen to fall. That thereupon, and daunted by the shrieks and tumult, the crowd began to disperse, and the soldiers went away, leaving the killed and wounded on the ground : which they had no sooner done than the rioters came back again, and taking up the dead bodies, and the wounded people, formed into a rude procession, having the bodies in the front. That in this order, they paraded off with a horrible merriment."

The Boot Tavern,<sup>1</sup> where Hugh fears that Barnaby may be under detention, was in Cromer Street, near Coram Street, where at No. 116 is a modern representative of the old inn. Avoiding this hostelry, Hugh and his companions repair to Fleet Market, which at that time, before it was swallowed up by Farringdon Street, was "a long irregular row of wooden sheds and pent-houses, occupying the centre of what is now called Farringdon Street. They were jumbled together in a most unsightly fashion in the middle of the road, to the great obstruction of the thoroughfare and the annoyance of passengers, who were fain to make their way, as they best could, among carts, baskets, barrows, trucks, casks, bulks and benches, and to jostle with porters, hucksters, waggoners, and a motley crowd of buyers, sellers, pickpockets, vagrants and idlers. The air was perfumed with the stench of rotten leaves and faded fruit ; the refuse of the butchers' stalls, and offal and garbage of a hundred kinds : it was indispensable to most public conveniences in those days, that they should be public nuisances likewise ; and Fleet Market maintained the principle to admiration."

Mr Haredale, on the other side, was all this time as active as anyone, and failing to obtain any promise of help or redress from the Lord Mayor himself, he goes off to Sir John Fielding (whose house, although proscribed, had not yet

<sup>1</sup> The Red Lamp Tavern, mentioned in this book, had its prototype in Barnard's Inn Tavern, a few doors from Langdale's Distillery.



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been destroyed), and gets his prisoner (Barnaby's father) promptly committed to Newgate. The famous magistrate's house was at No. 4 Bow Street, on the site of which the former Police Office (described elsewhere by Dickens) stood.

It is in Chapters LXIV. and LXV. that we get that wonderful description of the attack on Newgate of which no extract will give an adequate idea ; and so I leave the reader to study it in its entirety in the pages of *Barnaby Rudge*. So descriptive is it that I can recall nothing to equal it unless it be Carlyle's word-picture of the taking of the Bastille.

At last a display of energy on the part of the authorities took place. Writes Dickens :

“ At the Lord President's in Piccadilly, at Lambeth Palace, at the Lord Chancellor's in Great Ormond Street, in the Royal Exchange, the Bank, the Guildhall, the Inns of Court, the Courts of Law, and every chamber fronting the streets near Westminster Hall and the Houses of Parliament, parties of soldiers were posted before daylight. A body of Horse Guards paraded Palace Yard ; an encampment was formed in the Park, where fifteen hundred men and five battalions of militia were under arms ; the Tower was fortified, the drawbridges were raised, the cannon loaded and pointed, and two regiments of artillery busied in strengthening the fortress and preparing it for defence. A numerous detachment of soldiers were stationed to keep guard at the New River Head, which the people had threatened to attack, and where, it was said, they meant to cut off the main-pipes, so that there might be no water for the extinction of the flames. In the Poultry, and on Cornhill, and at several other leading points, iron chains were drawn across the street ; parties of soldiers were distributed in some of the old City churches while it was yet dark, and in several private houses (among them, Lord Rockingham's in Grosvenor Square), which were blockaded as though to sustain a siege, and had guns pointed from the windows. When the sun rose it shone into handsome



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apartments filled with armed men, the furniture hastily heaped away in corners, and made of little or no account, in the terror of the time—on arms glittering in City chambers, among desks and stools and dusty books—into little smoky churchyards in odd lanes and byways, with soldiers lying down among the tombs, or lounging under the shade of the one old tree, and their pile of muskets sparkling in the light—on solitary sentries pacing up and down in courtyards, silent now, but yesterday resounding with the din and hum of business—everywhere on guardrooms, garrisons, and threatening preparations.”

The Lord President was Lord Bathurst, and his residence was Apsley House, then of red brick, the site of which had been granted him only four years before the events here recorded. The Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, lived at 45 Great Ormond Street, a house from which the Great Seal had been stolen on 24th March 1784, under remarkable circumstances. Lord Rockingham’s abode in Grosvenor Square was the scene of that well-known “amiable” statesman’s death two years later.

In spite of a show of energy, which the bringing out of the troops and other measures indicated, and when London felt itself comparatively safe from further depredations, new fires blazed up in every quarter of the city, and, again to quote from the pages of the novel :

“In two hours, six-and-thirty fires were raging—six-and-thirty great conflagrations ; among them the Borough Clink in Tooley Street, the King’s Bench, the Fleet, and the New Bridewell. In almost every street there was a battle ; and in every quarter the muskets of the troops were heard above the shouts and tumult of the mob. The firing began in the Poultry, where the chain was drawn across the road, where nearly a score of people were killed on the first discharge. Their bodies having been hastily carried into St Mildred’s Church by the soldiers, they fired again, and following fast upon the crowd, who began to give way when they saw the execution that was done,

## BARNABY RUDGE

formed across Cheapside, and charged them at the point of the bayonet. . . .

“At Holborn Bridge, and on Holborn Hill, the confusion was greater than in any other part; for the crowd that poured out of the City in two great streams, one by Ludgate Hill, and one by Newgate Street, united at that spot, and formed a mass so dense, that at every volley the people seemed to fall in heaps. At this place a large detachment of soldiery were posted, who fired, now up Fleet Market, now up Holborn, now up Snow Hill—constantly raking the streets in each direction. At this place, too, several large fires were burning, so that all the terrors of that terrible night seemed to be concentrated in this one spot.”

Even the Royal palaces were threatened, and a double guard was posted before the Queen’s house—known to us in its transformed state as Buckingham Palace. Chains were fastened across the principal streets; and in the attack on the Bank, an attack happily frustrated, Hugh is figured as leading the rioters and performing what in a better cause would have been properly described as prodigies of valour.

At last the military established their supremacy. The rabble, too, drunk with slaughter and destruction, as well as with strong waters, found itself on all sides confronted with drawn bayonets and raking fire; and the back of the insurrection was broken. Lord George Gordon was taken, and lodged in the Tower; Hugh was hanged before Newgate, but as a matter of historical fact Dennis received a free pardon; and Barnaby, who was to have shared the same fate before Lord Mansfield’s house in Bloomsbury Square, likewise escaped, with a better reason. In the reprisals that took place the weakest and least guilty seem to have suffered most—two crippled boys being executed in Bloomsbury Square, another boy at Bow Street, a young man in Bishopsgate Street, and four wretched women elsewhere.

So great is the impression made, in the latter portion of *Barnaby Rudge*, by these heroic happenings, that the further

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fortunes of the people of the novel come almost as an anti-climax ; but, as the reader knows, it ends on a happy note at least for those who seem to have deserved happiness ; while justice is meted out to the execrable Sir John Chester by the sword of Mr Haredale, close to the Warren, and near the Maypole, in the village of Epping.



CHILD'S BANK, FLEET STREET  
AFTER A DRAWING BY FINDLEY, DATED 1855





## II

### A TALE OF TWO CITIES (1859)

THE dominating feature of *A Tale of Two Cities* is the devotion of hopeless love. Out of the crowd of characters, French and English, which fills the scene, one figure rises pre-eminent, the figure of Sydney Carton, touched with the sadness which is inseparable from wasted opportunities and unrequited affection. Indeed one cannot call to mind a more pathetic character in the whole range of Dickens's creations than that of this young man, with all his natural gifts stultified by want of purpose ; with all his essential goodness warped ; with all the fine edge of his nature worn away by the vice which is the effect as well as the cause of his failure to be true to himself.

At least this is one side of his character as presented to us ; for there were really two Sydney Cartons. What he is when we first meet him at Darnay's trial in the Old Bailey, and what he is acting as jackal to Stryver in King's Bench Walk, is very different from what he is after he has seen Lucie ; after love has cleansed him, as by fire ; after he has silently made his great renunciation—an act as beautiful as, if less dramatic than, that in which he gives himself as a victim for another—through a love which is stronger than death.

In no single work of Dickens does one figure so markedly stand out from the rest as does that of Sydney Carton in this book. When we think of it, it is he who rises to the mind's eye, to the exclusion of all the rest. In *Copperfield* David has to share our attention with Mr Micawber and Betsey Trotwood ; in *Martin Chuzzlewit* Tom Pinch and Pecksniff and Sarah Gamp are equally prominent ; in *Dombey and Son* we cannot think of Paul without thinking of his father, and Carker's teeth are as imminent as Captain Cuttle's hook :

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even in *Pickwick* the immortal hero is indissolubly associated with Jingle and Sam Weller, and so forth. But in *A Tale of Two Cities* Sydney Carton stands forth alone, and we visualise the book as the record of his career alternately of disorder and devotion, and see him at the last, as the crowd around the scaffold saw him, transfigured in a splendid apotheosis.

With the exception, perhaps, of *Barnaby Rudge*, *A Tale of Two Cities* is the most *documenté* book Dickens wrote—that is to say, of course, that it is largely historical. Its author, as he tells us, had steeped himself in Carlyle's vivid presentment of the varying phases of the French Revolution ; he had, one thinks, also not overlooked De Tocqueville's great work on the *Ancien Régime*, for in his description of "Monseigneur in Town" and "Monseigneur in the Country" he has caught the spirit of that period preceding the upheaval, and, by a phrase here or a word there, has contrived in an extraordinarily vivid way to convey the essence of what De Tocqueville has told us in his bulky volume. The chapter in which the great French seigneur is described as driving from his hotel in Paris to his château in the country, is replete with touches which show a careful study of the conditions obtaining in France before the final explosion. The miserable condition of the country people ; their pathetic reliance on the overlord as a sort of terrestrial Providence ; their numb acceptance of overbearing tyranny ; their submission to the most intolerable taxation ; their readiness to be treated rather like brute-beasts than like men and women ; their patience, begotten of a long, long servitude, are all indicated with a clarity and precision that could only come of a close acquaintance with the domestic history of France, and could only have been thus transfused, as it were, into telling and unforgettable pictures, sometimes but the smallest of vignettes, by the alembic of genius. Were one to recommend a book in which the condition of the French peasantry during the last quarter of the eighteenth century could best be studied, one would, of course, first point to De Tocqueville ; but I doubt if even his masterly treatment of the subject



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would remain in the mind so vividly as that in which Dickens has caught its very essence in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

It is not Paris and France, but London and England, that here interests us however ; and in this book, although the references to the metropolis are not specially numerous, what there are of them are particularly interesting, for the London of *A Tale of Two Cities* is the London of the earlier half of George III.'s long reign, and thus, chronologically, the book takes its place next to *Barnaby Rudge*, the chief scenes of which occur but a few years before. This will be realised in the very first chapter, which is appropriately headed "The Period," and gives a rapid summary of the time of the story and the scenes amid which it opens. I cannot do better than let Dickens speak for himself in this connection. After a passage describing the state of things in France—a state of things that left so much to be desired, and was prophetic of such terrible happenings to come—he proceeds :

"In England there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night ; families were publicly cautioned not to go out of town without removing their furniture to upholsterers' warehouses for security ; the highwayman in the dark was a city tradesman in the light, and, being recognised and challenged by his fellow-tradesman whom he stopped in his character of 'The Captain,' gallantly shot him through the head and rode away ; the mail was waylaid by seven robbers, and the guard shot three dead, and then got shot dead himself by the other four, 'in consequence of the failure of his ammunition' ; after which the mail was robbed in peace ; that magnificent potentate, the Lord Mayor of London, was made to stand and deliver on Turnham Green by one highwayman who despoiled the illustrious creature in the sight of all his retinue ; prisoners in London jails fought battles with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball ; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from

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the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms ; musketeers went into St Giles's to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob, and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way. In the midst of them, the hangman, ever busy and ever worse than useless, was in constant requisition ; now stringing up long rows of miscellaneous criminals ; now hanging a housebreaker on Saturday who had been taken on Tuesday ; now burning people in the hand at Newgate by the dozen, and now burning pamphlets at the door of Westminster Hall ; to-day taking the life of an atrocious murderer, and to-morrow of a wretched pilferer who had robbed a farmer's boy of sixpence. All these things, and a thousand like them, came to pass in and close upon the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five."

This general survey gives point to the feelings of the travellers in the Dover coach, of whom Mr Jarvis Lorry, of Tellson's Bank, Fleet Street, was one, which are indicated in the following chapter thus : " The Dover mail was in its usual genial position that the guard suspected the passengers, the passengers suspected one another and the guard, they all suspected everybody else, and the coachman was sure of nothing but the horses." In this state of mind they are overtaken by Jerry Cruncher, whom they not unnaturally at first suppose to be a gentleman of the road, especially as they have by this time arrived at Shooter's Hill, a locality favoured by highwaymen in those days for obvious reasons, and bearing almost as bad a reputation as Blackheath or Turnham Green.

We need not follow Mr Lorry to Dover, where he is joined by Lucie Manette, or to Paris, whither the two journey to bring back the long-forgotten prisoner of the Bastille, Dr Manette. For a description of Tellson's Bank awaits us in the opening chapter of Book II. " It was," writes Dickens, " an old-fashioned place, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. It was very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious. Tellson's was the triumphant perfection of inconvenience. After bursting open a door of idiotic

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obstinacy, with a weak rattle in its throat, you fell into Tellson's down two steps, and came to your senses in a miserable little shop with two little counters . . . by the dingiest of windows which were always under a shower-bath of mud from Fleet Street, and which were made the dingier by their own iron bars proper, and the heavy shadow of Temple Bar. . . . Your deeds got into extemporised strong rooms made of kitchen and sculleries. . . . Your lighter boxes of family papers went upstairs into a Barmecide room . . . where your letters were but newly released from the horror of being ogled through the windows, by the heads exposed on Temple Bar."

As is well known, the original of Tellson's was Child's Bank, situated directly next to Temple Bar, on the south side of the thoroughfare, as its rebuilt successor is to-day, and known as No. 1 Fleet Street. Child's Bank has a long and remarkable history, and the names of some of its customers are historic. It was founded in 1671, so that when, in 1775, Mr Lorry tells the waiter at the inn at Dover that Tellson's had been in existence nearly one hundred and fifty years, he was a little overstating the facts. In those days the famous Devil Tavern was next door, but during the course of the story—to be precise, in 1788—the Bank premises were extended to cover the site of Ben Jonson's favourite hostelry; and one thinks Dickens might have made something of this circumstance had he remembered it. The sign of the house was "The Marygold," perpetuating the name of the tavern which had previously stood on its site. The Bank depicted by Dickens is, of course, no longer in existence, having been pulled down in 1879 to make way for the present structure.<sup>1</sup>

Outside Tellson's an odd-job man or occasional porter was wont to sit by day, ready to do errands for the Bank. He had a wooden stool made out of a broken-backed chair cut down, which the son used to carry for his father every

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the Bank, its history and its famous customers—Cromwell, Nell Gwynn, Dryden, Marlborough, William III., and many more among them—see Hilton Price's *Ye Marygold*.



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morning to its appointed place beneath the banking-house window nearest Temple Bar. The name by which this "honest tradesman," as he described himself (he had been so baptized in the parish church of Houndsditch), was known was Jerry Cruncher, and he lived with his "flopping" wife and red-haired offspring in Hanging Sword Alley, Whitefriars, close by. This not then savoury neighbourhood is a turning out of what is now known as Whitefriars Street, a name perpetuating that of the whole of this neighbourhood, where the Priory of the White Friars once stood, and where, in the reign of James I., debtors were free from apprehension, and the whole place was given up to undesirable and lawless inhabitants.

Hanging Sword Alley was once known as Blood-bowl Alley, from the Blood-bowl House, a notorious resort which figures in Hogarth's "Industry and Idleness" series. The later alternative name of the street was taken from the sign of the "Hanging Sword" on one of its houses, according to Stow.

Jerry, sitting at his usual spot, is one day desired to go to the Old Bailey and carry a note to Mr Lorry, who is there attending the trial of Charles Darnay. This gives occasion for Dickens to present a vignette of that redoubtable place: "They hanged at Tyburn in those days," he says, "so the street outside Newgate had not obtained one infamous notoriety that has since attached to it. But the jail was a vile place, in which most kinds of debauchery and villainy were practised, and where diseases were bred, that came into court with the prisoners, and sometimes rushed straight from the dock at my Lord Chief Justice himself, and pulled him off the bench. It had more than once happened that the judge in the black cap pronounced his own doom as certainly as the prisoner's, and even died before him. For the rest the Old Bailey was famous as a kind of deadly inn-yard, from which pale prisoners set out continually, in carts and coaches, on a violent passage into the other world: traversing some two miles and a half of public street and road, and shaming few good citizens, if any. So powerful is use and so desirable to be good use in the beginning. It was famous, too, for its pillory,

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a wise old institution . . . also for the whipping post ; also for extensive transactions in blood money. . . . Altogether the Old Bailey, at that date, was a choice illustration of the precept that ‘ Whatever is is right.’ ”

The Central Criminal Court now occupies the site of old Newgate Prison, which was pulled down in 1902, and of which relics may be seen in the Guildhall Museum. I may further annotate the foregoing passage by stating that the last person hanged at Tyburn was John Austin, whose execution took place on 7th November 1783 ; the first open-air hanging in front of Newgate being on the following 7th December.

Such was the place where the evidence of the spy Barsad and the “ virtuous ” servant, Roger Cly, was unable to swear away Darnay’s life, and where Sydney Carton did so much in his indolent way to save him. After that trial Carton, as we know, takes Darnay down Ludgate Hill to Fleet Street, up a covered way into a tavern, to recruit his strength after the ordeal.

The tavern selected was, no doubt, the famous Cheshire Cheese, in Wine Office Court, where *The Vicar of Wakefield* had been written but twenty years earlier—a tavern with so large a history that it has filled a book.

Later, Carton, after trying to obtain some sleep, gets up, tosses on his hat, and hies him to the Temple, where, having revived himself by twice pacing the pavements of King’s Bench Walk and Paper Buildings, he turns into Stryver’s chambers in the former structure. One may, to-day, select any one of the picturesque doorways as having once given access to the successful barrister’s rooms, for the houses there, dating from the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and some of them due to Wren’s genius, remain essentially as they were at the date of the story. If No. 3 was Stryver’s, then he may have occupied the rooms of Goldsmith, who was living there in 1765. Paper Buildings, however, is new, and the ugly block was erected after the original had been destroyed in the famous fire of 1838. The earlier structure was

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“a row of goodly tenements,” and probably rivalled in picturesqueness King’s Bench Walk opposite; it dated from 1685, and replaced the buildings consumed in the Great Fire. Stryver’s chambers were upstairs; for when Carton’s work for the night was done, his host “followed him out on the staircase, with a candle, to light him down the stairs.” We can follow the “jackal” “across a silent terrace” probably Crown Office Row, and with him climb “to a high chamber in a well of houses,” which may have been Plowden Buildings, whose form and old-world air, amidst so much that is modern, recall those earlier days.

From the Temple to Soho as the crow flies is not a long journey; it was farther for Mr Lorry coming from his lodgings in Clerkenwell, and forming one of the “hundreds of people” of whom Miss Pross complained as continually besetting Dr Manette’s house. This dwelling is generally supposed to be Carlisle House in Carlisle Street, although the good doctor’s name has been given to another neighbouring street in Soho.<sup>1</sup> Dickens’s description of the place must be given in full:

“A quainter corner than the corner where the Doctor lived was not to be found in London. There was no way through it, and the front windows of the Doctor’s lodgings commanded a pleasant little vista of street that had a congenial air of retirement in it. There were few buildings then north of the Oxford Road, and forest trees flourished, and wild flowers grew, and the hawthorn blossomed in the now vanished fields. As a consequence, country airs circulated in Soho with vigorous freedom instead of languishing into the parish like stray paupers without a settlement; and there was many a good south wall, not far off, on which the peaches ripened in their season.

“The Doctor occupied two floors of a large still house, where several callings purported to be pursued by day, but whereof little was audible any day, and which was shunned by all of them at night. In a building at the back, attainable

<sup>1</sup> Manette Street, formerly Rose Street.



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by a courtyard, where a plane-tree rustled its green leaves, church organs claimed to be made, and silver to be chased, and likewise gold to be beaten by some mysterious giant who had a golden arm starting out of a wall of the front hall. . . . Very little of these trades, or of a lonely lodger rumoured to live upstairs, or of a dim coach-trimming maker asserted to have a counting-house below, was ever heard or seen."

"There were three rooms on a floor, with doors by which they communicated. The first was the best room, and in it Lucie's birds and flowers and books and desk, and work-table, and box of water-colours ; the second was the Doctor's consulting-room, used also as the dining-room ; the third, changingly speckled by the rustle of the plane-tree in the yard, was the Doctor's bedroom, and there, in a corner, stood the disused shoemaker's bench and tray of tools."

Among other occupants of the house at this very time was the famous fencing and riding master, Angelo, and when Miss Pross complained of the "hundreds of people" coming there, although they did not come to see Lucie, they certainly did to visit Angelo, whose friends and patrons were among the most illustrious of the day—a fact recorded in his son's well-known *Reminiscences*.

The region of Soho, in which Dr Manette lived, and in which so much of the story passes, is one of the most interesting in London. You can hardly walk a yard in its little streets and byways without recalling some historic or literary name of eminence, or without coming across at least vestiges of some once splendid and fashionable dwelling.

For instance, at the very date of the tale, William Blake was living and working here, either in Broad Street from 1778 to 1787, or in Poland Street from 1788 to 1793, where Shelley was to lodge some eighteen years later ; in Great Marlborough Street Mrs Siddons abode from 1790 till 1803 ; in Wardour Street Flaxman had his studio from 1782 to 1787 ; while Angelica Kauffmann was in Golden Square, whose stones re-echoed to the noise of carriages setting down

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all sorts of illustrious ones (including Sir Joshua) at her door ; Sir Joseph Banks was in Soho Square ; Sir Thomas Lawrence in Greek Street ; and Edmund Burke, during the trial of Warren Hastings, in Gerrard Street, where, at the Turk's Head Tavern, the Literary Club, founded by Johnson, held its meetings till 1783.

One need not specify earlier residents ; it is enough to enumerate some of those who were at one time or another neighbours of the little circle of Carlisle House,<sup>1</sup> whose fortunes we are following.

If you visit the place to-day you can see the actual spot where the Doctor of Beauvais dwelt, and perhaps if you listen carefully, hear again the echo of those footsteps that were destined to bring so many tragic happenings into this seemingly peaceful retreat.

An incidental reference to the Tower, on one occasion here, causes Darnay to relate an anecdote of one of the prisoners, an anecdote that, recalling past terrible associations, results in Dr Manette starting up in dismay. This is the story as given by Dickens :

“In making some alterations, the workmen came upon an old dungeon, which had been, for many years, built up and forgotten. Every stone of its inner wall was covered by inscriptions which had been carved by prisoners—dates, names, complaints, and prayers. Upon a corner stone in an angle of the wall, one prisoner, who seemed to have gone to execution, had cut, as his last work, three letters. They were done with some very poor instrument, and hurriedly, with an unsteady hand. At first they were read as D.I.C., but, on being more carefully examined, the last letter was found to be a G. There was no record or legend of any prisoner with those initials, and many fruitless guesses were made what the name could have been. At length it was suggested that the letters were not initials, but the complete word, ‘Dig.’ The floor was examined very carefully under the inscription,

<sup>1</sup> Not, of course, to be confounded with the other Carlisle House in Soho Square associated with Mrs Cornelys and her entertainments.

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and in the earth, beneath a stone, or tile, or some fragment of paving, were found the ashes of a paper, mingled with the ashes of a small leathern case or bag. What the unknown prisoner had written will never be read, but he had written something, and hidden it away to keep it from the jailer."

I cannot say whether this inscription was actually discovered, or whether it was merely an invention of Dickens; but there are plenty of similar records left by miserable prisoners, some of which Ainsworth gives in his novel, *The Tower of London*.

It was on the occasion when the tale of the prisoner in the Tower was being narrated, that Mr Lorry was of the party, and as the great bell of St Paul's was tolling one he sets out, attended by Jerry, on his return to his lodgings in Clerkenwell. "There were solitary patches of road on the way, between Soho and Clerkenwell, and Mr Lorry, mindful of footpads, always retained Jerry for this service."

Indeed, that part of London presented an appearance hardly realisable to us accustomed to more or less wide streets and tall houses, not only covering this area but stretching miles away in all directions. It was certainly built over, but there were those "solitary patches," and, what is more, Mr Lorry went by way of Holborn, either up Hatton Garden or Saffron Hill, a neighbourhood whose notorious character remained almost unchanged till the earlier years of the nineteenth century.

We pass alternately from London to Paris in the next few chapters. While Monseigneur is going from the capital to his château in the country, and to death, Darnay is for the most part occupied in teaching the undergraduates of Cambridge the French language, or in doing the like for pupils in London, where no doubt he had lodgings in Soho near Dr Manette's house. Stryver, too, is working at his law cases, with Carton's assistance, and is shouldering himself along from the Temple to Soho, or trying to arrange a party of pleasure at Vauxhall Gardens or Ranelagh, as a preliminary to his projected proposal for Lucie's hand.



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Dickens speaks of "Vauxhall," but the place retained its earlier name of Spring Garden till 1785, so that unless the projected visit was after that date, a slight anachronism may here be detected. But there is no doubt about the resort being, like Ranelagh, a fashionable one, for such it remained till the end of George III.'s reign, after which, for many a year, it may best be described as popular.

About the same time the mock funeral of the spy Barsad, with its assistant disorderly crowd, passes by Tellson's Bank, on its way to St Pancras old church, far off in the fields. We all know what young Jerry saw when he followed his father at night to the newly made grave in its churchyard, and how the father's discovery of a coffin filled with brickbats was destined to be used as a dramatic incident, in Paris, towards the close of the story.

In the course of time Lucie is married to Darnay, from Dr Manette's house, at a neighbouring church, obviously St Anne's, Soho, which was then without its present steeple, that feature being erected only in 1802, although the fabric itself had been built in 1686. The work of reconstruction later undertaken at St Anne's by Sir Arthur Blomfield—about 1865—materially changed the features of the church as it was known to the Manette family.

After this the tale is concerned wholly with Paris. Darnay has been drawn to the Loadstone Rock by Gabelle's pathetic appeal for help; he has been imprisoned, and has to fear the worst, when Dr Manette and Lucie suddenly appear before the astonished Mr Lorry (also in Paris in charge of Tellson's French branch), and the Doctor succeeds in freeing his son-in-law; only, however, for that much-tried young man again to be arrested and condemned to death. Sydney Carton's devotion, the consequent saving of Darnay and the escape of the whole family to London, is known to the readers of the book—a book which ends sadly, yet triumphantly, in that scene on the scaffold when Carton faces death for a hopeless love, and the baleful knitting of Madame Defarge has ceased for ever.



VAUXHALL  
AFTER ROWLANDSON AND PUGIN





### III

#### SKETCHES BY BOZ (1836)

THE *Sketches by Boz* represent Dickens's first excursion into literature. They were written when he was a very young man, and bear obvious signs of immaturity—a fact their author was not slow to recognise. They first appeared in *The Monthly Magazine* and *The Evening Chronicle*; and a selection from them was collected and published in book form in 1836. They are divided into four sections, the first being a series of seven articles under the general title of "Our Parish"; the second, twenty-five papers, chiefly on places in London, and entitled "Scenes"; the third, containing twelve chapters of so-called "Characters"; and the fourth, a like number of "Tales," including such well-remembered stories as "Horatio Sparkins" and "Mrs Joseph Porter."

All these articles, whether they be Scenes, Characters or Tales, are full of contemporary references to London and its immediate vicinity; and are packed with those acute observations on men and things which were to be further developed in the longer novels. Indeed these *Sketches by Boz* may almost be regarded as elaborate notes on the proper understanding of London life and manners, for use in the more complex works that were to succeed them. One can picture the youthful Dickens going about the metropolis seeking character, with a quick eye for anything notable, with a receptive mind for anything memorable, finding his quarry and duly making a note of it (in anticipation of his own Captain Cuttle's advice), one day in Seven Dials, another in Doctors' Commons, meditating on Monmouth Street or being bedazzled by the thousand and one lamps of Vauxhall. The streets and the shops, the omnibus and the hackney-cab, the enjoyments of the people at a tea-garden

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or at Astley's or Greenwich Fair, the House of Commons or a public dinner in the city, the Criminal Court and Newgate, all afford him food for speculation ; all contribute to that panorama of life in the great city of which he was to prove the most popular of all exponents. As we shall see, the section of the book entitled "Scenes" is frankly one dealing directly with London life and character. In the other papers and tales London forms nearly always the background, and the allusions to it are innumerable. In "Our Parish," however, such references are so slight that, were it not for a phrase here and there, that parish might be in any place in the United Kingdom. Indeed it is only because in the seventh chapter the author remarks that he bent his steps towards Eaton Square<sup>1</sup> that we can tell that he is writing in, or referring to, London at all. Incidentally, however, this single phrase is not uninteresting in another connection, for, so far as I know, it is the only reference to a spot west of Charing Cross to be found in Dickens's first book, and is one of the relatively few to be discovered in any of his works.

Passing thus "Our Parish," let us examine the London of the earliest Victorian years as reproduced for us through the spectacles of *Boz*. The two opening chapters describe, in a general way, the appearance of the London streets as they presented themselves to the writer's eye, both during the day- and night-time. These vignettes have an atmospheric quality rather than a realistic one. Allowing for the differences in architectural environment, in the dress and general appearance of the citizens, in the presence of hackney-coaches and hackney-cabs in place of taxis and occasional hansoms, in the omnibuses of the Shilliber type instead of the enlarged mechanical monsters of our own time, the description might serve if written to-day as accurately, or nearly so, as when it was penned in the thirties of the last century. Covent Garden Market is as dirty and as thronged in the early hours of the morning now as it was then ; and

<sup>1</sup> Eaton Square was comparatively new at this period, having been formed only in 1827.

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although "numbers of men and women (principally the latter), carrying upon their heads heavy baskets of fruit, toiling down the park side of Piccadilly, on their way to Covent Garden," may have been replaced by quicker and less arduous forms of vegetable conveyance, yet carts and waggons still break the virginal silence of that unique thoroughfare, and the birds sing, in the adjacent park (although behind a more elaborate barrier) in the days of George V., as sweetly as they did in the time of Victoria.

One thing is no longer seen—the mail coach. Says Dickens : "The mail itself goes on to the coach office in due course, and the passengers who are going out by the early coach stare with astonishment at the passengers who are coming in by the early coach." We should stare with astonishment, indeed, if such a thing could be seen in any part of London to-day ; just as our forefathers would have done, could they have been transported into a future where the great termini were the coach offices and iron horses brought in the mails from ten times the old distance in a quarter the old time. The "Wonder," the "Tally-ho," and the "Nimrod" are known to us from Alken's or Pollard's pictures, and seem as prehistoric as the Pyramids !

"Cabs, with trunks and band-boxes between the drivers' legs and outside the apron, rattle briskly up and down the streets on their way to coach offices or steam-packet wharfs." To us the passage sounds like gibberish, and requires annotation like a disputed Greek manuscript of a bad period<sup>1</sup> ; and so far have we advanced in the science of locomotion that when the cab-driver is made to exclaim, how people can prefer "them wild beast cariwans of homni-buses to a riglar cab with a fast trotter !" and the hackney-coachman to wonder, how people can trust their necks into one of "them crazy cabs, when they can have a 'spectable 'ackney coach with a pair of 'orses as von't run away with no vun !" we might be perusing a document describing

<sup>1</sup> Before 1836 the cab was capable of carrying only one person besides the driver ; in that year four-wheeled cabs were introduced.



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something in the Middle Ages. I suppose the hansom cabmen made, at a somewhat later date, a not dissimilar remark about the growler, and *vice versa* ; while it is pretty certain that in our own progressive days the taxi and the growler (if there be any remaining) would bandy the same sort of verbal badinage ; to-morrow it will, perhaps, be the turn of the aeroplane conductor to pour scorn on the archaic inactivity of the motor.

“ The early clerk population of Somers and Camden Towns, Islington, and Pentonville, are fast pouring into the city, or directing their steps towards Chancery Lane and the Inns of Court,” we read. What would Dickens have said could he, to-day, see this same population being disgorged, not from Islington and Pentonville, but from the capacious mouths of those monsters which daily throw up their hordes—Liverpool Street or King’s Cross, Waterloo or Charing Cross or Victoria—hordes that live not in what are now actual parts of London, but in that vast area that has since arisen—Greater London—which in the novelist’s day was practically the country, and market-gardens flourished where now rows and rows of houses have grown up in greater profusion than the cabbages and potatoes of a less crowded and sophisticated era !

We can tell what the streets of that far-off London looked like, not merely from such descriptions as Dickens has left us, but from the labours of topographical draughtsmen who have recorded the appearance of the capital and the life of its thoroughfares through the medium of the brush and the graver. Examine those marvellous lithographs of Shotter Boys, or the exquisite water-colours of Shepherd and Schnebbelie, or the remarkable series of elevations which Bigot and Whittock produced for Tallis. There you have the outstanding monuments ; the shops and the houses ; the people that trod the streets, in their habits as they lived ; the conveyances that rumbled over something more slippery and far noisier than our wood-pavements and asphalts. The very appearance of the architecture has taken on already a



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sort of historic character, as of something known to us merely by these written and artistic records; the style of dress seems as archaic as that which obtained under the Stuarts or the Georges; the outlines of the conveyances—stage-coaches, hackney-coaches, hackney-cabs and omnibuses—appear fraught with an almost prehistoric air, and strike our wondering eyes and minds as being as *démodé* as, in a few years, will appear to our descendants the motors and taxis of our own enlightened period.

The streets by night, as described in the following chapter, are, if anything, still more unlike those of these times than they appear by daylight. True, there are the essentials of similarity, because darkness helps the illusion, but when one descends to particulars, the changes wrought by the flight of eighty odd years are obvious enough. Gas-lamps are now the exception rather than the rule, for instance; the cry of the muffin-man is an almost unknown sound, though a pleasant enough one when it can make itself heard above the roar of mechanism that dominates London. Dickens chooses, characteristically enough, a November night for his lucubrations—a night that somehow seems to anticipate the atmosphere of many of his novels, *Bleak House* in particular. Who could tell, however, even with the aid of increased illumination, where the Marshgate is, or even the Victoria Theatre<sup>1</sup> of which he makes mention? And around their purlieus are we likely to come across “the little block-tin temples sacred to baked potatoes, surmounted by a splendid design in variegated lamps,” or “the candle in the transparent lamp, manufactured of oil-paper, embellished with ‘characters’ which the kidney-pie manufacturer has such difficulty in keeping alight, running backwards and forwards to the next wine-vaults to get a light”? Wine-vaults themselves are as much a thing of the past as chain armour!

It is a wet night and “the constant clicking of pattens on

<sup>1</sup> The Victoria Theatre in the Waterloo Road was originally the Coburg, built in 1816; as the Victoria it was first opened in 1833. It is indeed the “Old Vic.” Marshgate was a part of Lambeth Marsh.

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the slippery and uneven pavement bears testimony to the inclemency of the weather." Pattens are no more familiar objects now than are the water-men, of whom Dickens proceeds to speak, and who had nothing to do with the river, but were the attendants at the hackney-coach and cab-stands, and the so-called "watering"-houses attached to many of them.

Another sign of a past era was the Harmonic Meeting, which took place "in a lofty room of spacious dimensions, where are seated some eighty or a hundred guests knocking little pewter measures on the tables, and hammering away, with the handles of their knives, as if they were so many trunk-makers. They are applauding a glee, which has just been executed by the three 'professional gentlemen' at the top of the centre table, one of whom is in the chair."

These harmonic meetings were to be found in all sorts of localities and in all sorts of rooms, many of them anything but lofty or capable of holding a quarter of eighty or a hundred guests. The small shopkeeper found in them a means of regular evening recreation, and the novelists who depict this period, have generally made no little use of these haunts as *mises-en-scènes*. Glees were a favourite amusement, and the "professional gentlemen," alluded to above, generally had some favourite piece with which they were pretty sure of "bringing down the house." Readers of *Bleak House* will recall the Harmonic Meeting held at the Sol's Arms on the night after the inquest on the body of "Nemo," and also after the spontaneous combustion of Krook. It was to a resort of a better class, but of not dissimilar character, that Colonel Newcome took Clive, and speedily withdrew him on Costigan's outbreak into what the gallant soldier termed indecent ribaldry.<sup>1</sup>

As will be seen, the topography of these opening chapters is rather atmospheric, if I may thus term it, than actual. We get pictures of London life under divers conditions,

<sup>1</sup> This was the Cave of Harmony, which has been identified as the once famous Evans's, in Covent Garden.

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but nothing specially exact about London landmarks. In Chapter III., however, we have a description of Scotland Yard, particularly interesting because it connotes something very different from what the name does to-day. In Dickens's own words, Scotland Yard was "a small—a very small—tract of land, bounded on one side by the river Thames, on the other by the gardens of Northumberland House: abutting at one end on the bottom of Northumberland Street, at the other on the back of Whitehall Place." The author then proceeds to denote its isolation in his whimsical way, describing how it was discovered by a country gentleman, who found its settlers to be a strong and bulky race, who repaired the wharfs in Scotland Yard regularly. We have become so long accustomed to the mediæval building known as Scotland Yard (properly New Scotland Yard) that we shall only be able to realise the position of the earlier place of the same name by annotating Dickens's rather vague description.

In those days this area was divided into Great Scotland Yard, Middle Scotland Yard, and Little Scotland Yard, the last named being the most southerly. The entrance to Great Scotland Yard was next to No. 35 Charing Cross, and just opposite the Admiralty. It was so called because the kings of Scotland and their ambassadors were occasionally lodged here, in a palace originally given by King Edgar to Kenneth III. of Scotland, for the purpose of a *pied-à-terre*, when he came to London to do homage. The place was dismantled in the time of Elizabeth. The public-house mentioned by Dickens was probably at one of the corners of the narrow entrance to Great Scotland Yard from Whitehall.

"But the choicest spot in all Scotland Yard was the old public-house in the corner," writes Dickens, who indicates that it was a great resort of coal-heavers, who here quaffed mighty draughts of Barclay's best, and puffed volumes of smoke from darkling pipes. "Thither, mixing with memories of the more grave and aged among them of times before Waterloo Bridge<sup>1</sup> was built, or the Patent Shot Manufactory

<sup>1</sup> Waterloo Bridge, opened in 1817.



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thought of, came reports as to the possible pulling down of old London Bridge<sup>1</sup> and the building of a new one. Anon this became an accomplished fact, and in addition a new market sprang up at Hungerford close by,<sup>2</sup> and the Police Commissioners established their office in Whitehall Place"; while, adds Dickens, "the traffic in Scotland Yard increased; fresh Members were added to the House of Commons, the Metropolitan Representatives found it a near cut, and many other foot-passengers followed their example."

Already in the novelist's day drastic changes had overtaken the spot once almost derelict. The character of the public-house and the little shops in its purlieus had changed: at one end of the row of small houses that stood here, a boot-maker, apparently with fashionable leanings, had established himself, and was, when Dickens writes, exhibiting "real Wellington boots"; and only one old man seemed to mourn the downfall of the ancient place, seated on a wooden bench "at the angle of the wall which fronts the crossing from Whitehall Place"—the presiding genius of what was formerly Scotland Yard.

"A few years hence," says our author, "and the antiquary of another generation looking into some mouldy record of the strife and passions that agitated the world in these times, may glance his eye over the pages we have just filled: and not all his knowledge of the history of the past, not all his black-letter lore, or his skill in book-collecting . . . may help him to the whereabouts, either of Scotland Yard or of any one of the landmarks we have mentioned in describing it."

In Chapter V. we find ourselves in a very different locality, the Seven Dials of almost proverbial fame, the Seven Dials of a very real and squalid existence down to our own times. "What involutions can compare with those of Seven Dials?" asks Dickens; "where is there such another maze of streets, courts, lanes, and alleys? Where such a pure

<sup>1</sup> New London Bridge was opened in 1831.

<sup>2</sup> This was in 1831-1833, when the old market, originally built in 1680 on the site of what is now Charing Cross Station, was reconstructed.

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mixture of Englishmen and Irishmen, as in this complicated part of London ? ” One can remember something of the maze-like intricacy which the novelist indicates—an intricacy more bewildering even than that of Soho, where, according to Gilbert, Policeman X. met so tragic a fate. Well might Dickens remark that “the stranger who finds himself in ‘The Dials’ for the first time, and stands, Belzoni<sup>1</sup>-like, at the entrance of seven obscure passages, uncertain which to take, will see enough around him to keep his curiosity and attention awake for no inconsiderable time. From the irregular square into which he has plunged, the streets and courts dart in all directions, until they are lost in the unwholesome vapour which hangs over the house-tops, and renders the dirty perspective uncertain and confined ; and lounging at every corner . . . are groups of people, whose appearance and dwellings would fill any mind but a regular Londoner’s with astonishment.” It was the haunt especially of the bricklayer’s labourer in those days—wretched dilapidated tenements, some of which had been important houses in older times ; rag and bone shops ; low, dingy public-houses ; miserable stores filled with miserable goods, the consumption of a miserable neighbourhood—in short, a disgrace, if ever there were one, to the great city. Krook had his filthy shop in its purlieu ; Miss Flite existed, living on hope, and alone able to endure her surroundings through an almost merciful madness ; “Nemo” died here and his body was “sat on” by the coroner in the Sol’s Arms close by. Where was, or were, the Seven Dials then ? Only the older among us, or those who have studied their London, could really tell off-hand. One might suppose them to have been in the lowest parts of London, such as Whitechapel or Bow or Ratcliffe Highway, down by the Docks. Not at all : they were within a stone’s throw of London’s centre.

I say they were, but really the Seven Dials still exist, although in a very different form to what they were when

<sup>1</sup> The famous traveller and excavator, who exhibited his feats of strength at Sadler’s Wells in 1803.



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Dickens wrote. Their centre is, indeed, the point whence radiate St Andrew's Street (the northern continuation of St Martin's Lane), Earl Street, Queen Street, and White Lion Street. The column, on which seven dials were marked, was removed so far back as 1773, and in 1820 was purchased by the inhabitants of Weybridge and set up there as a memorial to the Duchess of York, to commemorate her long residence at Oatlands Park.

In his "Meditations on Monmouth Street,"<sup>1</sup> which bounded the Seven Dials on the west, Dickens presents us with a picture of that thoroughfare given up specially to the sale of second-hand clothes. It had borne this particular character for a great length of time. Indeed "a Monmouth Street laced coat" was, as he says, a byword in the eighteenth century. As such Defoe describes it, as do Gay and Garth. The west side of the street now forms a portion of Shaftesbury Avenue.

Were I writing a history of wearing apparel, or even an account of the manners and customs of the period when Queen Victoria ascended the throne, I could amplify my remarks on this chapter of the *Sketches by Boz* by copious extracts and still more copious annotations. But I am mainly concerned here with the topography of Dickens's works, and there is, therefore, nothing further to be said about the Monmouth Street of old clothes and their dealers. Nor does the following chapter on "Hackney-Coach Stands" afford much further special need for comment. The so-called "watermen" and "watering-places" attached to these spots have already been explained in this chapter, as well as the difference between a hackney-cab and a hackney-coach; while the incidental references made by Dickens in the course of the article to Fitzroy Square, the Tottenham Court Road, and the Golden Cross at Charing Cross, will not need any explanation here, as we shall come across all of them associated with immortal figures later on.

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray mentions the street in *Philip*. "I have," he says, "a grim pleasure in thinking that . . . Monmouth Street was once the delight of the genteel world."

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Chapter VIII., however, entitled "Doctors' Commons," does require a more careful consideration, not only because its position is not generally known nor its significance in the past likely to be realised to-day, but because it is Dickens's first description of a place which he was to use with no little effect in *David Copperfield*, and which he himself knew with something of familiarity other than that of a mere observer.

Dickens describes how, happening to be walking through St Paul's Churchyard, he turned down a street called Paul's Chain and found himself in the immediate purlieus of Doctors' Commons. "Now," he proceeds, "Doctors' Commons is familiar by name to everybody, as the place where they grant marriage licences to love-sick couples, and divorces to unfaithful ones; register the wills of people who have anything to leave, and punish hasty gentlemen who call ladies by unpleasant names." He then gives us a little picture of the actual scene of these multifarious activities: "Crossing a quiet and shady court-yard, paved with stone, and frowned upon by old red brick houses, on the doors of which were painted the names of sundry learned civilians, we paused before a small, green-baized, brass-headed-nailed door, which, yielding to our gentle push, at once admitted us into an old quaint-looking apartment with sunken windows, and black carved wainscoting, at the upper end of which, seated on a raised platform, of semicircular shape, were about a dozen solemn-looking gentlemen in crimson gowns and wigs."

I will not continue the description for two reasons, the first and best being that those who are anxious to know something of the old-world procedure of the Court of Arches and Doctors' Commons already have it from a far greater than I; and secondly, because it would be taking us beyond our proper topographical limits. It is sufficient to say that one of those long arguments, at which Dickens so frequently and happily tilted in *Bleak House*, and elsewhere, was in course of development on the occasion of the novelist's visit, and that he makes characteristic reflections on the variations

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of human nature displayed in the Doctors' Commons of his day.

Doctors' Commons was situated in St Bennet's Hill, St Paul's Churchyard. It comprised five courts: the Court of Arches; the Prerogative Court; the Consistory Court of the Bishop of London; the Court of Faculties; and the High Court of Admiralty. The work it did is now carried on at the Law Courts.

In another chapter of the *Sketches*, entitled "London Recreations," we have a sort of bird's-eye view of the amusements of the humbler classes in the year 1837, assemblies in imitation of Almack's<sup>1</sup> and the Tea Gardens, which were then so numerous, being the chief of these. It will be interesting to note the position and character of some of the more important of the latter institutions.

There was, for instance, Sadler's Wells, where all sorts of entertainments were given, and people taking refreshments could even watch balloon ascents, such as those of the Grahams in 1838; and Bagnigge Wells, where a concert-room was opened by Monkhouse in 1831, and where the last entertainment was given in 1841. Those fond of swimming could indulge their bent at the Peerless Pool, where the Blue Coat boys were wont to congregate; and those who preferred solely to take liquid enjoyments internally could do so at the Shepherd and Shepherdess, rebuilt in 1838 as the Eagle Tavern, in the City Road. In Marylebone, the Yorkshire Stingo had concerts every evening until its close about the year 1848; and the Bayswater Tea Gardens, whose site is now covered by the houses of Lancaster Gate, was a favourite resort till 1854.

Other similar places in this district were the Adam and Eve Tea Gardens, where bowls were a special attraction, and the White Conduit House, where Sloman, the *improvisatore*, exhibited his skill about the time Dickens was writing the *Sketches by Boz*. The Belvidere Tea Gardens, in the Pentonville

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of Almack's, see the author's *Memorials of St James's Street* (Grant Richards).



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Road, and Copenhagen House, between Battle Bridge and Highgate, were favourite Sunday resorts ; to which may be added, *inter multa alia*, Highbury Barn and The Spaniards (a favourite of Dickens himself) ; Jenny's Whim in Pimlico ; Cromwell's Gardens, whose name is perpetuated by the Cromwell Road ; St Helena Gardens, Rotherhithe, and the Vauxhall of innumerable memories, with a record of over two hundred years of varied amusements.

Dickens makes no actual mention of any of these. Indeed his sketch is rather concerned with the habits and character of the *habitués*, than with the history or position of their resorts. One thing he does specify, and that is the delight the daily worker in the city took then in his garden, as such vast numbers still do. But their gardens were in different localities from what they are now. Not Balham or Streatham Hill, or Forest Hill or Kew, or where you like, but at Hackney and Clapton and Stamford Hill, in the Hampstead or Kilburn Roads, were the centres of this horticultural activity ; and few things indicate more clearly the immense expansion of London since those days, than the way in which the city man has now to go farther and farther afield for fresh air and green pastures. Nothing but a system of railways and trams and omnibuses, beyond the dreams of our less sophisticated forbears, could enable the urban worker thus to become, for a few hours of recreation, a suburban gardener. In spite of the growth of London in terms of square miles, geraniums and calceolarias are thus brought practically as near the city's centre as they were when Dickens's "regular City man" "cultivated his garden" in parts that are now integral portions of the "Wen."

Although at the beginning of the Victorian era the river at London was not made use of as a pleasure resort to the extent it had been during the eighteenth century, and for very good and obvious reasons, yet there was much more "boating" on it than is now the case, and "parties of pleasure," as they were called, although the term seems contradicted by, for instance, a well-known picture dating

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from about this time,<sup>1</sup> were made up to go from Westminster and Lambeth and elsewhere to Kew and Richmond and such-like favourite haunts. Dickens himself says how changed the appearance of the banks had become, from the Red-'us to Blackfriars Bridge. This Red-'us, otherwise the Red House, was situated at Battersea, and was a famous landmark on the Surrey side of the river, nearly opposite Chelsea Hospital; it was a favourite tea garden and a noted place for shooting matches, being, until the coming of Battersea Park, the headquarters of the Gun Club. It was demolished in 1850. Blackfriars Bridge was, of course, not the present structure, but that erected between 1760 and 1769. It must, however, have been then in process of those drastic repairs which were completed in 1840, but which, although they cost £100,000, were found at the end of twenty years to be so useless that a new bridge was decided upon. By the way, Dickens remarks that "the Penitentiary is, no doubt, a noble building," which phrase is, of course, "wrote sarcastic." This eyesore no longer exists. It was completed in 1816 on plans inspired by Jeremy Bentham, was converted into an ordinary prison in 1870, and was pulled down in our own time.<sup>2</sup>

In those days, besides the more or less regular boating in small craft, there were certain vessels which plied between London Bridge and St Katharine's Dock, Gravesend and Margate; and incidentally, as we learn from Chapter X. of the *Sketches by Boz*, there existed no little rivalry between the two companies owning these steamers. Dickens gives us a vivid picture of the respective wharves crowded with expectant passengers, with more being continually set down by ever fresh arriving hackney conveyances: "The Margate boat lies alongside the wharf," he tells us, "the Gravesend boat (which starts first) lies alongside that again; and as a temporary communication is formed between the two, by

<sup>1</sup> See "The Marigold Family on a Party of Pleasure," in *The English Spy*, 1826.

<sup>2</sup> The Tate Gallery stands on part of its site.



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means of a plank and a hand-rail, the natural confusion of the scene is by no means diminished."

Another form of amusement of the Londoner at this period was Astley's Circus. Nowadays circuses seem to be under a cloud—not exactly of sawdust. No longer do we find pleasure, nor do our children or children's children (as the case may be), in what one remembers oneself as an orgy of pure delight—the large (or it seemed large to us) circular area; the almost impossibly dignified master of the Ring, in his immaculate attire and with his prodigiously long whip; his condescension as he bandied witticisms (always getting the worst of the verbal encounter, but coming off best by a sort of truculent authority of mien) with the clown, who appeared suddenly, saying, "How was we to-morrow," or something equally smart and clever, and who always would get in the way when the hoops were handed round to the attendants mounted on the red-covered softly padded barrier, preparatory to the appearance of the beautiful lady (with such long hair) who came in on an ambling palfrey of dubious breed and with unique markings. How gracefully she rose on that great square board on which she had hitherto negligently lolled; while with a sharp flip of the master's whip on the flanks of the steed away she went, the first time simply kneeling and rising to her feet, but the second—! Up go the hoops, and as she approaches they are lowered ever so slightly, and through she flies and on to the steed's back again. That is something, but not *the* sight; for that the ordinary hoops are changed for others covered with white paper. They are raised at her second approach, and through she crashes—one can almost hear that tearing of crisp paper, through so many years!

Well, this is the sort of thing Dickens describes in his chapter on "Astley's"—and where is Astley's now, or Sanger's, or any of those circuses to which we were taken in our youth?

The original Astley's was situated in the Westminster Bridge Road, and was at first but a temporary erection, put up in 1774. It was converted into a covered amphitheatre

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six years later ; and in 1862 was made into a regular theatre by Dion Boucicault.

Greenwich Fair is too far out of London to claim more than the mere reminder that Dickens includes it in his list of London amusements of his earlier days. But something must be said of Vauxhall Gardens—although the writer restricts his impressions to those haunts of pleasure “by day”—for Vauxhall was a survival into the nineteenth century of one of the two outstanding London pleasure resorts of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Although the ancient glory of Vauxhall had, by the beginning of the new century, largely departed, and its special character had altogether changed, yet it was destined to have a prosperous career under altered and modified conditions. Just as Thackeray, in the famous sixth chapter of *Vanity Fair*, gave us a vignette of Vauxhall by night, “with its ten thousand *extra* lamps” and the immortal Simpson<sup>2</sup> walking the place in a colossal transparency, its discreet arbours and its indiscreet rack-punch, so Dickens shows us the gardens by daytime, when one of those balloon ascents, which were not unfrequent there, was in process of materialisation. The novelist indicates the *unromantic* air of the place as seen by the light of day, the boards and sawdust, as it were, which the alchemy of the stars *and* the gas-lamps turned into a sort of fairyland. Even the concert given “by a small party of dismal men in cocked hats, who were ‘executing’ the overture to *Tancredi*,” appears to have had but a half-hearted air ; although a comic singer was so “marvellously facetious” that our author thought that one of the audience “who had his dinner in a pocket-handkerchief” would have fainted from excess of joy.

The fact is, the place had become a lower middle-class paradise, into which those of a higher stratum of society who were avid for fresh experiences sometimes went, as an

<sup>1</sup> See *The Eighteenth Century in London*, by the author.

<sup>2</sup> There was a great benefit given for Simpson in 1833 to commemorate the thirty-sixth year of his management.

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antithesis to the opera or Almack's. What a change from those earlier days when Vauxhall rivalled Ranelagh, and half the rank and fashion of London found the one as fascinating as the other! "All the ornaments were dingy and all the walks gloomy"; and unless it was for those who had exhausted every possible form of amusement elsewhere, does Vauxhall, at least by day, appear to have held forth any special inducements—except the balloon and Mr Green, the daring aeronaut. However, even down to 1850, when Doyle made his well-known view of it for *Punch*, people seem to have danced there, in the open air, with as much ardour as they do to-day at Ciro's more discreetly covered haunt.

Of all the sights in London which differentiated the city from what it is now, the stage-coaches were, I suppose, on the whole, the most picturesque and the most marked. To-day, if a coach is seen dashing down Piccadilly on its way to Hampton Court or Richmond, the sight is one which attracts the most *blasé*. The sound of the horn is unlike any other sound; a bit of an earlier day seems to be passing before our eyes; we hail the phenomenon as a pleasant throw-back to more spacious times, and as a grateful change from the constant whir and shrieking of vehicular machinery. The relative rarity of the sight has no doubt something to do with its attraction, and I dare say our forefathers, who were used to seeing stage-coaches continually rumbling along, were less alive to their intrinsic charm than we think we should be could the old days return. But that they *did* possess a spice of excitement even then, is proved by the fact that contemporary writers on the manners and customs of the period seldom fail to speak of them with something like enthusiasm. Dickens is no exception, and in the *Sketches* we have a chapter devoted to "Early Coaches," in which he describes an imaginary traveller trudging down Waterloo Place, on his way to the Golden Cross. He is clad in a Petersham<sup>1</sup> great-coat, and carries a green travelling

<sup>1</sup> Called after that famous Regency Buck, Lord Petersham, whose appearance is known from the caricatures of Dighton and others.



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shawl and a carpet bag. Arrived, he seeks the Birmingham High-flier, without success, and so wanders into the booking-office, "which with the gas-lights and blazing fire, looks quite comfortable at half-past five on a winter's morning." The coach is "up the yard," and will be ready in about a quarter of an hour, so the traveller goes to "The Tap" to comfort himself with some hot brandy and water. Before he can consume a quarter of it, six o'clock strikes from St Martin's Church; the coach is out, and guard and porters are stowing away luggage in breathless haste. Everything is suddenly hurry and bustle; the arrival of the papers—*Times*, *Chronicle*, *Herald*—with their bawling vendors, adds to the excitement. "Highly interesting murder, gen'lm'n," shouts one; "Curious case of breach o' promise, ladies," vociferates another. "Take off the cloths, Bob," commands the driver. Up jump the passengers. "All right," sings out the guard, springing up and blowing his horn. "Let 'em go, Harry, give 'em their heads," cries the coachman, and off they start.

This was a scene that was daily taking place all over London: at the Golden Cross; at the Bull and Mouth; at the Belle Sauvage; the White Horse Cellars, and where not. The coaching-inns were as the sands of the sea, and they as well as the appearance of the coaches, either leaving or arriving, have been perpetuated for us by the hands of Pollard and Shayer, Alken and Cruikshank, whose colour prints of such scenes are so attractive and popular.

Another chapter on "Omnibuses" is full of amusing reflections—reflections on the vehicle itself, with its gaudy exterior; on its conductor, then called a "cad"; on its passengers. But such topics are proper rather to a book on the manners of the populace than on the outlines of the city in which they lived and worked. Most of us remember, not indeed the original omnibuses of the Shilliber type, which ran from the Yorkshire Stingo to the Bank in 1829, at a fare of 1s., but those of the London General Omnibus Company, started under French auspices in 1855, and becoming an

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English concern eight years later, which seem only the other day, so time flies, to have been replaced by the motor-buses, which rush through the streets, leaving their trails of slimy exudations to mark their passage. I suppose even these drop, in the vicinity of Lincoln's Inn Fields or Bedford Row, of Shoe Lane or Farringdon Street, much the same kind of people as Dickens says the omnibuses of his day were in the habit of doing. But what a difference, not only in the vehicles in which they are carried, the pace at which they go, and the streets through which they pass ! There can be little either in the Strand or Fleet Street, or Oxford Street, or where you will, which would be familiar to their eyes. Save a church here and there and some public building, most of the old landmarks have disappeared, improved out of existence, and in their place a new city has arisen, is still gradually arising, unknown to the omnibus "cad" of a century ago, and even strange to those who made their journeys by similar means fifty years later.

As with the omnibus, so with the cab. To-day we have one type, the taxi, with here and there a sort of belated hansom, and, *rari nantes* indeed, perhaps a superannuated four-wheeler, the growler of our earlier days.

In Dickens's time there were the hackney-coaches, drawn by two horses ; the hackney-cab, drawn by one, and the cabriolet—a sort of forerunner of the hansom, whose driver sat at the *side* of the enclosed space in which the fare was immured. One, of which the novelist speaks in Chapter XVII. of the *Sketches*, was painted a bright red, and wherever he went, "City or West End, Paddington or Holloway, North, East, West, or South, there was the red cab, bumping up against the posts at street corners, and turning in and out, amongst hackney-coaches, and drays, and carts, and waggons, and omnibuses," and by some occult means always extricating itself miraculously from the tangle.

A tangle—for so from Dickens's point of view it nearly always was, and as a reporter in its gallery he ought to have known, if any man ever did—of another sort is presented to us



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in the following chapter, entitled "A Parliamentary Sketch." There is no necessity to examine what the writer has to say about the House of Commons in those days. Twemlow once described it, you will remember, as the best club in London. It may have been in his time, but if to-day any member of a club acted as certain members of Parliament are in the habit of acting, there would soon be an end of club life, or of the life of the member—at any rate as a member of a club. Then, indeed, the typical Irish member would "eat more dinner than three English members put together, and then went home to Manchester Buildings or Millbank Street"; then, the famous Bellamy<sup>1</sup> presided over the kitchen of the House; then, the country member would appear marvellously arrayed in "his loose, wide, brown coat, with capacious pockets on each side; knee-breeches and boots; and immensely long waistcoat, with silver watch-chain dangling below it; wide-brimmed brown hat, and white handkerchief tied in a great bow, with straggling ends sticking out beyond his shirt-frill." He was a survivor of the ample days of Fox and Pitt and Sheridan and Canning, and was always asserting "how much better the House was managed in those times."

And the House itself—the building I mean. What would he think of that? In his time it was in course of construction, the first stone being laid in 1840; and our legislators were still housed in St Stephen's Chapel, rebuilt in the time of Edward II., and used as the House of Commons till its destruction by fire in 1834.

Certain of the papers contained in the *Sketches by Boz*, while revealing interesting aspects of London life and character, can hardly be said to be specially rich in references to London topography. The urban atmosphere pervades them, but that is their chief quality so far as they come within our present purview. Thus in the chapter entitled "Public Dinners" there are but two references to

<sup>1</sup> Pitt's last words are said to have been a request for one of his pork pies.

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actual places—one to the White Conduit House, where the chimney-sweepers held their annual feast, and the other to the Freemasons' Tavern in Great Queen Street. The first of these has long since disappeared. It was so named from a conduit which supplied water to the Charterhouse, but was demolished in 1831. The place was itself finally shut up in 1849. At the period when Dickens was writing—1836-1837—Blackmore of Vauxhall made from these gardens some of his balloon ascents, and Charles Sloman, about the same time, entertained people here with his impromptu verses.

Freemasons' Tavern, which was originally built in 1786, was reconstructed, with the addition of a new banqueting hall, in 1868, so that the place Dickens knew no longer exists in its original form.

Similarly in the following sketch, headed "The First of May," Dickens is seeking some of those ostensible signs of revelry and mummary which in older days were wont to usher in the merry month ; and when at last he does succeed in running to earth a poor substitute for those earlier May Day rejoicings, when Herrick's Corinna was urged by her swain to "come a-Maying," he has scoured half London in his efforts to find a "Jack in the Green" and a "May Queen." The only pillars were anything but rustic ones ! "What would your Sabbath enthusiasts say," he questions, "to an aristocratic ring encircling the Duke of York's column in Carlton Terrace—a grand *poussette* of the middle classes around Alderman Waithman's monument in Fleet Street—or a general hands-four-round of ten-pound householders, at the foot of the Obelisk in St George's Fields ? "

For those who may have forgotten it, I may remark in passing that the Duke of York's statue stands on the site of the centre of Carlton House which was pulled down in 1826. The statue by Westmacott was set up in 1830-1833, on the column designed by Benjamin Wyatt.

The obelisk commemorating Alderman Waithman, a shawl merchant and public benefactor, whose shop was at the corner of Fleet and Bridge Streets, was erected in 1833,

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Waithman himself having died in that year. One remark Dickens makes which affords a topographical note. This is where he records his wanderings on May Day as far as Copenhagen House and back by Maiden Lane and Battle Bridge. Copenhagen House, a once well-known resort, as I have before mentioned, stood at the junction of York Road and North Road, close to the Cattle Market. The Lion public-house approximately marks its site.

In his lucubrations on brokers' and marine-store shops (Chapter XXI.), and gin-shops (Chapter XXII.), we come across the same kind of casual reference to places incidental to the subject—Drury Lane and Covent Garden and the Royal Coburg theatres for instance, around whose purlieus the theatrical dealers congregated, and Ratcliffe Highway, where the wearing apparel was chiefly nautical, or the King's Bench prison on the Surrey side, where every conceivable article found its way into the old clothes stores of the neighbourhood ; and in the matter of gin-shops, the handsomest of which, he tells us, were "in and near Drury Lane, Holborn, St Giles's, Covent Garden, and Clare Market," he seeks his quarry by passing "through the narrow streets and dirty courts which divide Drury Lane from Oxford Street, and that classical spot adjoining the brewery at the bottom of Tottenham Court Road, best known to the initiated as the 'Rookery.'"

In view of the changes which have taken place in these quarters since those days, this passage would bear any amount of annotation ; but it is not so much old London as the London of Dickens's novels which here concerns us, and a glance at one of Cruchley's plans of this period will show what congeries of small streets and alleys have been replaced by modern improvement in these quarters.

The division of the *Sketches by Boz* headed "Scenes" closes with chapters dealing respectively with "Criminal Courts" and "Newgate." In the novelist's time both these institutions presented a very different appearance from what they do to-day. "The rough heavy walls and low massive doors"



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of Dance's structure, which appeared to him so dreadful, and which so many of us can well remember, no longer exist. No longer can the curious, in Sessions time, stray here, as he did, to catch a glimpse of the whipping-place, or to wonder at "the dark building on one side of the yard in which is kept the gibbet with all its dreadful apparatus." No longer does that baleful black flag denote the end of some wretched existence.

Dickens, for the purposes of his description of the interior of Newgate, made a thorough examination of the place which then formed a square, "of which the four sides abutted respectively on the Old Bailey, the old College of Physicians <sup>1</sup> (now forming a part of Newgate Market), the Sessions House, and Newgate Street." Those interested in the subject will read for themselves this vivid account. What Dickens found was, in many essentials, a survival of those earlier days in which a cruel and inhuman treatment tended to brutalise even those prisoners whose crimes were not inexpressible. What he wrote on the subject then, and later, was largely the means of ameliorating such a condition of things; and in a subsequent edition of the *Sketches* he was able to append a footnote to this chapter stating that "the regulations of the prison relative to the confinement of prisoners during the day, their sleeping at night, their taking their meals, and other matters of gaol economy, have been altered—greatly for the better—since this sketch was first published. Even the construction of the prison itself has been changed."

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that Newgate prison was designed by George Dance the younger, the first stone being laid by Alderman Beckford in 1770, and that executions used to take place in front of it down to 1868.

In the section of the *Sketches* entitled "Characters" the

<sup>1</sup> The College was then situated in Warwick Lane, Newgate Street, where its headquarters had been since the Great Fire. It removed to its present home in Trafalgar Square in 1825; and in 1866 the Warwick Lane premises were pulled down.



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main object, as is signified by the heading, is to develop that observation into personal idiosyncrasies, which was one of Dickens's most highly developed characteristics. What topographical references are to be found there are in the nature of passing allusions to streets and localities too well known to need annotation. Here and there reference is made to some object once familiar to Londoners, but now among past features of interest. Thus when Dickens mentions, in "Thoughts about People," the clock at Exeter 'Change, in the Strand, the reader might wonder where it is, especially as it is grouped with those of St Clement's, St Martin's, and the New Church<sup>1</sup> (otherwise St Mary-le-Strand), at which we may all set our watches to-day—generally, by the by, with varying results !

It is therefore necessary to note that Exeter 'Change stood where Burleigh Street is now ; and, as may be seen in old prints, abutted on to the roadway, so that the pavement ran through it, it being entered by gates which were closed at night. It was erected in the seventeenth century and remained till 1829. Nor is the Quadrant any longer in existence, although the "precocious puppyism" that, according to our author—and others—was once wont to frequent it, may not be entirely absent from its precincts. It was, of course, that portion of Regent Street at the eastern end, which until recently went sometimes by this name. The arcade, of which certain remains can be still seen in Leicester Street, was removed in 1849. A writer on London, commenting on this, says: "Thus was sacrificed the most beautiful and most original feature in the street architecture of London." What he would have said had he lived to see all Nash's work ruthlessly destroyed, as it is, passes comprehension.

In "The Parlour Orator," although we get nothing actually topographical, we are given a little vignette of one of those bar-parlours attached to the old-fashioned public-houses of London which bore the Dickens hall-mark, and

<sup>1</sup> It is curious how long the title of New Church clung to this edifice.

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carry our minds back to days before the coming of "the stuccoed, French-polished, illuminated palaces" at which the author girds. Here is his description :

"It was an ancient, dark-looking room, with oaken wainscoting, a sanded floor, and a high mantelpiece. The walls were ornamented with three or four old coloured prints in black frames, each print representing a naval engagement, with a couple of men-of-war banging away at each other most vigorously . . . and the foreground presented a miscellaneous collection of broken masts and blue legs sticking up out of the water. Depending from the ceiling in the centre of the room, were a gas-light and a bell-pull; on each side were three or four long narrow tables, behind which was a thickly-planted row of those slippery, shiny-looking wooden chairs, peculiar to hostelrys of this description. The monotonous appearance of the sanded boards was relieved by an occasional spittoon; and a triangular pile of those useful articles adorned the two upper corners of the apartment."

Quite a little Dickens interior, don't you think, hit off with the art of one of those Dutch genre painters—De Hooze or Vermeer.

In "The Misplaced Attachment of Mr John Dounce" we have references to Offley's, and the Rainbow Tavern in Fleet Street, both places of the past. The former, which was situated at No. 23 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, was noted for its Burton ale and the size of its chops. It seems to have had a short, although during some years a successful, career. The Rainbow Tavern, on the other hand, had an existence, including that as a coffee-house established by James Farr, from the middle of the seventeenth century to our own days, having been rebuilt in 1860.

Miss Amelia Martin, "The Mistaken Milliner," lived in Drummond Street, George Street, Euston Square, which runs in front of Euston Station, while "The Dancing Academy" was in the neighbourhood of Gray's Inn Road, and *not*, as Dickens is careful to inform us, "in Spring Gardens, or

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Newman Street, or Berners Street, or Gower Street, or Charlotte Street, or Percy Street, or any other of the numerous streets which have been devoted time out of mind to professional people, dispensaries, and boarding-houses." Dickens once described with all his wonted care and observation another famous dancing academy—namely, Mr Turveydrop's, and as we shall meet with that later on, it is unnecessary to stop to consider here his more tentative efforts in the same direction.

The last section of *Sketches by Boz* is concerned with various tales. First we have "The Boarding House," in Great Coram Street,<sup>1</sup> kept by Mrs Tibbs, in what is described as "the partially explored tract of country which lies between the British Museum and a remote village called Somers Town." All this area has, of course, changed out of recognition since Dickens penned his story in, or about, the year 1837. It is perhaps sufficient here to say that Fore's plan of 1835 shows no Euston Railway Station, and that so little built over was London in this quarter that the map ends just north of the Polygon. In Bauerkeller's plan of 1842, the railway has come, but it was many years before the enormous development of building in this quarter took place.

In the course of the tale one or two references require a word of explanation. Thus "Richardson's Show" is alluded to. This show was one of the standing dishes of Bartholomew Fair, and was one of its perennial attractions—plays and menageries, monstrosities and natural phenomena being exhibited in strange juxtaposition.

Again Dickens speaks of "the waxen images in Bartellot's window in Regent Street." By the help of Tallis's Views, we are able to identify the actual position of this shop. It was at No. 254, a few doors up from Piccadilly Circus, on the west side of the street.

A reference to New St Pancras Church requires the remark that this building had then been only about fifteen years in

<sup>1</sup> Where George Osborne's friend and henchman, Young Todd, lived, by the way.



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existence, having been completed and consecrated in 1822. It was designed by William Inwood ; but the interior decorations by J. G. Crace, were not undertaken till 1866.

In the second tale "Mr Minns and his Cousin," we find the hero holding "a responsible situation under Government," otherwise being a clerk in Somerset House, and residing in a first floor in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden ; while his cousin Mr Budden lived in a cottage at Stamford Hill—Amelia Cottage, Poplar Walk, to wit. When Mr Minns is induced to pay a visit to this fastness, he is told by his cousin that "the coach goes from the Flower Pot, in Bishopsgate Street," and sets him down at the Swan, Stamford Hill.

Where is the Flower Pot to-day ? It stood at the corner of Bishopsgate Street and Leadenhall Street, and was one of the last remaining inns in London bearing this sign. The coming of railroads gave it its death blow, and it was pulled down in 1866, to make way for commercial buildings.

One wonders what, if any, connection there could be between the Minerva House, Hammersmith, that "finishing establishment for young ladies," kept by the Misses Crumpton, and Miss Pinkerton's famous academy, on Chiswick Mall. They were evidently run on very similar lines ; and the story in which we are introduced to the former, may well be read as a companion sketch to Thackeray's better-remembered delineation. If Mr Sedley, the rich merchant, sent his daughter to the one ; the other received the very sentimental offspring of Cornelius Brook Dingwall, M.P., of the Adelphi ; with what results the reader of the story knows already.

The remaining tales do not give much scope for London annotation. What quarters or places are mentioned, are of such a general and well-known character as hardly to require even a passing mention. Here and there exceptions occur, as when in "Horatio Sparkins" Mrs Malderton and her daughters go on a shopping expedition to Messrs Redmaynes,<sup>1</sup> in Bond

<sup>1</sup> Tallis shows it as No. 20 New Bond Street, with a low frontage flanking the higher buildings behind.



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Street ; or where, in "The Steam Excursion," we are introduced to Mr Percy Noakes, law student, inhabiting a set of chambers in one of the houses in Gray's Inn Square, "which command an extensive view of the gardens and their usual adjuncts—flaunting nursery-maids, and town-made children with parenthetical legs" ; or to Mrs Taunton in her domicile in Great Marlborough Street. Who lives in Great Marlborough Street to-day ? We have, too, passing references to Mr Loggins, the solicitor, of Boswell Court, and Mr Samuel Briggs, of Furnival's Inn ; and the Briggs family of Portland Street, Oxford Street. In this story it is the river that bulks chiefly—the Steam-Packet wharf, and Strand Lane ; the Custom House ; the London Bridge Wharf, the Pool, and the Thames Police Office, with Margate as the ultimate objective.

We know, too, that the Gattletons (who gave the amateur dramatic performance at which Mrs Joseph Porter acted so rudely) lived at Rose Villa, Clapham Rise ; and that Mr Watkins Tottle who was subsequently destined to be suddenly arrested for debt, and carried to a lock-up house in the vicinity of Chancery Lane—Cursitor Street, of course, where we meet Skimpole and Rawdon Crawley, and, indeed, many of Dickens's and Thackeray's characters—occupied rooms in Cecil Street, Strand.

Dickens gives us a little picture of the interior of the particular lock-up in which the incarcerated Tottle was visited by his friend Parsons, and the passage is worth transcribing :

"The room—which was a small, confined den—was partitioned off into boxes, like the common-room of some inferior eating-houses. The dirty floor had evidently been as long a stranger to the scrubbing-brush as to carpet or floor-cloth : and the ceiling was completely blackened by the flare of the oil-lamp by which the room was lighted at night. The grey ashes on the edges of the tables, and the cigar ends which were plentifully scattered about the dusty grate, fully accounted for the intolerable smell of tobacco which

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pervaded the place; and the empty glasses and half-saturated slices of lemon on the tables, together with the porter pots beneath them, bore testimony to the frequent libations in which the individuals who honoured Mr Solomon Jacobs by a temporary residence in his house indulged. Over the mantel-shelf was a paltry looking-glass, extending about half the width of the chimney-piece; but by way of counterpoise, the ashes were confined by a rusty fender about twice as long as the hearth."

Concerning those unfortunate people to be found here, playing cards or cribbage, with greasy packs of cards, or smoking and drinking, I must leave the reader to find out from Dickens's text. It is sufficient to give this vignette of the general appearance of a place which bulks largely in the annals of a certain stratum of society at this period.

Except for the fact that "The Bloomsbury Christening" took place in St George's Church, the happy father, Kitterbell, residing at No. 14 Great Russell Street, Bedford Square (as he put it), or Tottenham Court Road (as his morose uncle Dumps insisted on writing it), this story does not materially add to our search for Londoniana in the *Sketches by Boz*.

In the last tale, however, there is a word-picture of one of those derelict streets that at this period interpenetrated the purlieus of what was known as Whitefriars—a neighbourhood now noisy with the machinery of the daily Press, and altogether changed from its erstwhile squalor.

Dickens is describing the return home of the wretched drunkard whose death forms the *motif* of the tale:

"At the back of Fleet Street," he writes, "and lying between it and the water-side, are several mean and narrow courts, which form a portion of Whitefriars: it was to one of these that he directed his steps. The alley into which he turned might, for filth and misery, have competed with the darkest corner of this ancient sanctuary in its dirtiest and most lawless time. The houses, varying from two stories in height to four, were stained with every indescribable hue that long exposure to the weather, damp, and rottenness can

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impart to tenements composed originally of the roughest and coarsest materials. The windows were patched with paper, and stuffed with the foulest rags ; the doors were falling from their hinges ; poles with lines on which to dry clothes, projected from every casement, and sounds of quarrelling or drunkenness issued from every room.

“The solitary oil-lamp in the centre of the court had been blown out, either by the violence of the wind or the act of some inhabitant who had excellent reasons for objecting to his residence being made too conspicuous ; and the only light which fell upon the broken and uneven pavement, was derived from the miserable candles that here and there twinkled in the rooms of such of the more fortunate residents as could afford to indulge in so expensive a luxury. A gutter ran down the centre of the alley—all the sluggish odours of which had been called forth by the rain ; and as the wind whistled through the old houses, the doors and shutters creaked upon their hinges, and the windows shook in their frames, with a violence which every moment seemed to threaten the destruction of the whole place.”

From all we know, from other sources, this is a substantially true and not overdrawn picture of one of those rookeries which once disgraced London, and of which Dickens, as we shall see, was to give us another picture, in *Bleak House*, when describing Tom-all-Alone's.

As will be realised, Dickens's object in writing these *Sketches by Boz* was chiefly to portray “character.” But he was a Londoner by predilection, and most of the scenes in which he places his puppets are in London. Sometimes, as in the above passage and others I have quoted, he gives us, therefore, a careful description of some particular *locale*. Practically all the places he thus pictures for us have disappeared, and thus the chief value, from a topographical point of view, of this, his earliest, work lies in the fact not that, here, he speaks of Snow Hill (although that, as he knew it, has gone) or Furnival's Inn (where, by the way, he wrote *Pickwick*), of Oxford Street or Bedford Row, or what not,

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but that he conveys in his picturesque and vivid way, the atmosphere of a London which he knew in his youth and much of which he was destined to see disappear before his relatively early death.

He began to "take notice," as they say of children, at a period of transition—a period when no little of the earlier century remained in existence; he was to take his leave when another transition period was imminent—at the close of the earlier Victorian era, at a moment when all sorts of enlarged conceptions of life were in the process of materialisation.



#### IV

### PICKWICK (1836-1837)

OF all Dickens's novels, *Pickwick* is that which requires the least introduction, and the most annotation. For it is known better, perhaps, than any other of the great author's books; and, at the same time, it is fuller of London allusions than any of them. This amazing middle-class epic has become one with the language; its characters have entered into our daily life to such an extent that one is always coming upon references to them, not only in the lighter forms of literature, but in those grave pronouncements, which tell all the world what it should do and whose solemn "we" is credited with the power of striking terror into the breasts of statesmen and autocrats—as *The Eatanswill Gazette* imagined it did—the leading articles. How often *Pickwick* has contributed some simile or some prototype to the daily and weekly Press, passes computation. The "Pickwickian sense" of a word or a phrase has become proverbial; a book has been compiled of Sam Wellerisms alone; the investigations into Pickwickian topography form a small library. In fact, unlike any other secular work, *Pickwick* has passed from the phase of being a book into the phase of being a national possession.

There is no criticising such a production as this; as Scott once said of Pepys's *Diary*, it is like a good sirloin which only requires to be basted with its own dripping. And like that marvel of self-revelation, it is *sui generis*. With Dickens's other books you can compare the works of various writers: *Pickwick* stands alone. It is not a novel. It has no plot. If ever a book were formless, it is so. But in the series of incidents of which it is composed; in the varieties of character which it exhibits; in its inexhaustible merriment and



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AFTER CRUIKSHANK





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whimsicality ; it has no rival. No pill to purge melancholy was ever concocted with half its efficacy ; no combination of laughter and tears (which are so nearly allied) has ever succeeded in its object, with a tithe of the success of this wonderful book.

It would be but an indirect aspersion on the intelligence of the reader to insist further on such obvious truths as these. But before turning to the London of the book, let me say here what I have often said without the medium of print : it is my firm opinion that no one can be wholly bad who can enjoy *Pickwick* ; and if I was told that the most hardened ruffian could delight in the doings of Mr Pickwick or the Cockney wit of Sam Weller, I should have something like a friendly feeling towards him—even if it was my duty, as a jurymen at his trial, to give my assent to his conviction. On the very first page we are introduced to London—the outlying areas of London rather—and we find “the unwearied researches of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G.C. M.P.C., in Hornsey, Highgate, Brixton, and Camberwell,” recognised by the Pickwick Club, as being undoubtedly of advantage to the cause of science ; while Mr Pickwick’s subsequent speech is received with enthusiasm by the members, with the exception of Mr Blotton (of Aldgate), whose miserable jealousy and bad temper leads him to call the Chairman “a humbug,” a remark only made possible by the same Mr Blotton subsequently enunciating, in extenuation, that he used the word in a Pickwickian sense ; having given birth to which undying phrase, he passes from our ken, like Single-Speech Hamilton, for ever famous through a unique effort. At the opening of the work Mr Pickwick had not only prosecuted researches amid the then rural environs of London ; but had produced those famous “Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with Some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats.” So that at a bound he comes before us as archæologist, topographer and naturalist. One of the ponds which Mr Pickwick investigated was no doubt that on the Heath, close to the highroad ; but his researches must



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have carried him to the half-dozen others that exist, and which are fed by the stream that rises in a meadow on the Manor Farm at Highgate, forming a large lake in the grounds of Caen Wood, whence it flows through Hampstead and Camden Town to London. One can imagine Mr Pickwick's paper enlarging on the chalybeate character of the water ; of the petrifications met with in its course ; of the ferruginous nature of its mineral properties ; and of its virtues as a tonic in cases of nervous debility—facts which others have also independently discovered.

But it is in Goswell Street that Mr Pickwick first identifies himself with London proper ; and it was on 13th May 1827 that he threw up his window, and looking out, beheld "Goswell Street at his feet, Goswell Street on his right hand, Goswell Street on his left, and Goswell Street over the way." Like President Hénault the sight induces in his active mind a philosophical reflection ; in this case one which forms the germ of those famous tours, in which he and his companions surveyed mankind, if not from China to Peru, at least from Ipswich to Bath, and from Rochester to Birmingham.

It is safe to say that whatever may be, or may have been, the interest of Goswell Street for individuals, for the world at large it is nothing but the residence of Mr Pickwick. Stow mentions it, so it is ancient ; but its real history begins on the 13th of May 1827. To-day the whole thoroughfare is known as Goswell Road ; but formerly that portion of it from Aldersgate to a little beyond Old Street was called Goswell Street ; and it was therefore in this section, obviously in a more or less central position, that Mr Pickwick lodged with Mrs Bardell.

"Mr Pickwick's apartments, although on a limited scale, were not only of a very neat and comfortable description, but peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of his genius and observation. His sitting-room was on the first floor front, his bedroom the second floor front ; and thus, whether he was sitting at his desk in the parlour, or standing before

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the dressing-glass in his dormitory, he had an equal opportunity of contemplating human nature in all the phases it exhibits, in that not more populous than popular thoroughfare."

The first stage of the Pickwickian peregrination is the coach stand at St Martin's-le-Grand, where the great man arrives "ready for any discoveries worthy of being noted down." The cab having been fetched, he instructs the driver to take him to the Golden Cross, Charing Cross. "Only a bob's worth," remarks the Jehu sulkily. The coach fares in those days were one shilling not exceeding one mile, and one shilling and sixpence for a mile and a half; so the cabby must have been under-estimating the distance when he made his remark, and one does not wonder at his subsequent behaviour when he receives the modest shilling and nothing more. As "The Commodore" coach bears away Mr Pickwick, reinforced by Snodgrass, Tupman, and Winkle, and in the joyous company of a stranger, Jingle, from the yard of the Golden Cross (then standing approximately on the site of the Nelson Statue, facing Whitehall) the loquacious stranger calls out "Heads, heads—take care of your heads," as they pass beneath the archway entrance; and illustrates his caution by one of his innumerable anecdotes and even an historical reference to Whitehall, as the scene of the loss of a once illustrious head. The coach arrives, in due course, at Rochester, where at the Bull, one of the number, another stranger, in this case a "dismal one," tells the story of "The Strolling Player," who had an engagement at one of the theatres on the Surrey side of the river, evidently either the Coburg, where the Old Vic is now; the Surrey, at the south end of Blackfriars Road; or Astley's, then an actual theatre, in the Westminster Bridge Road.

The doings at Rochester and Dingley Dell are outside our province, and we return to London with Mr Pickwick and Mr Wardle, in pursuit of Jingle and the infatuated Miss Wardle; and in Chapter X. we find them arrived at the White Hart, in the Borough. Writes Dickens:

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“There are in London several old inns, once the headquarters of celebrated coaches in the days when coaches performed their journeys in a graver and more solemn manner than they do in these times ; but which have now degenerated into little more than the abiding and booking places of country waggons. The reader would look in vain for any of these ancient hostelries, among the Golden Crosses and Bull and Mouths, which rear their stately fronts in the improved streets of London. If he would light upon any of these old places, he must direct his steps to the obscurer quarters of the town ; and there in some secluded nooks he will find several, still standing with a kind of gloomy sturdiness, amidst the modern innovations which surround them. In the Borough especially, there still remain some half-dozen old inns, which have preserved their external features unchanged, and which have escaped alike the rage for public improvement, and the encroachments of private speculation. Great, rambling, queer, old places they are, with galleries, and passages, and staircases, wide enough and antiquated enough to furnish materials for a hundred ghost stories, supposing we should ever be reduced to the lamentable necessity of inventing any, and that the world should exist long enough to exhaust the innumerable veracious legends connected with old London Bridge, and its adjacent neighbourhood on the Surrey side. It was in the yard of one of these inns—of no less celebrated a one than the White Hart <sup>1</sup>—that a man was busily employed in brushing off the dirt from a pair of boots.”

We are thus at a stroke introduced to a famous hostelry and a no less famous personage—Sam Weller. The latter is immortal ; of the former nothing now remains except the fame it has received at the hands of Dickens. But Mr Allbut, writing in 1886, could confirm the accuracy of Dickens’s

<sup>1</sup> Mr Ashby Sterry was always convinced that the George, close to the White Hart, was really the inn in question. But I cannot follow him in this. Portions of the old gallery of the George still remain, and one wishes Mr Sterry’s theory could be substantiated.



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description, and could add that it then, to a large extent, held good ; although a luncheon-bar of modern erection occupied one side of the old coach-yard, familiar to us in Phiz's well-known illustration. Three years later (1889) it was demolished—as all picturesque and interesting things seem doomed to be in London.

While Jingle has gone off to Doctors' Commons to get a licence—Doctors' Commons known so well to David Copperfield, and described by Sam Weller as being in “Paul's Churchyard ; low archway on the carriage-side, bookseller's at one corner, hotel at the other, and two porters in the middle as touts for licences ”<sup>1</sup> ; Pickwick and Wardle, with Perker, the solicitor, in attendance, arrive at the White Hart, and are received by Sam with a dirty boot in his hand.

There is a considerable gap before we again come into the London area—although we must not forget that it was in Goswell Street, and in Chapter XII., that Mrs Bardell is found by Snodgrass, Tupman, and Winkle, being supported in Mr Pickwick's arms, what time young Bardell stamps vigorously on the feet of our hero ; an incident that is destined to have tremendous consequences. Otherwise, however, we are back in Dingley Dell, or among the remarkable characters—Mrs Leo Hunter, and Pott, and Count Smorltork, amid the rural surroundings of the famed town of Eatanswill. It was in this innocent spot that Mr Pickwick received that pregnant letter from Messrs Dodson & Fogg, dated from Frecman's Court, Cornhill, on 28th August 1830, in which that precious firm intimate that they have been “instructed by Mrs Martha Bardell to commence an action for breach of promise, for which the plaintiff lays her damages at fifteen hundred pounds,” further informing Mr Pickwick that a

<sup>1</sup> The bookseller was F. Hurst ; the hotel was the St Paul's Coffee-house, then kept by Harvey & Son. They both occupied No. 5 (the latter also possessed No. 6), one on each side of the archway—Dean's Court—which ran under the house. It was in the south-west corner of the Churchyard.



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writ has been issued against him, in this suit, in the Court of Common Pleas.

Mr Pickwick received this missive (thunderbolt would, perhaps, be a better word) on the 30th of August, and on the following 2nd of September he takes coach for London. Arrived there, he goes to see Messrs Dodson & Fogg, and is ushered into the ground floor front of a dingy house, at the very farthest end of Freeman's Court—"a dark, mouldy, earthy-smelling room, with a high wainscoted partition to screen the clerks from the vulgar gaze . . . with a glass door leading into the passage which formed the entrance to the court."

Many writers on Dickens's London have concluded that because no Freeman's Court exists in Cornhill, and one does exist in Cheapside, that Dickens purposely mixed his localities, as in other instances he not infrequently does. In this case it was not so. The Freeman's Court, Cornhill, was between the old Royal Exchange and Finch Lane, and is clearly shown in Horwood's plan. When the new Royal Exchange was built (it was opened in 1844) this court was destroyed. It ran practically through what is now the open paved space behind the Royal Exchange. It is quite clear that Cornhill is intended as the *locale*, for on leaving Dodson & Fogg's, Mr Pickwick, attended by Sam Weller, "walked on abstractedly, crossed opposite the Mansion House, and bent his steps up Cheapside."

Intending to go and consult his solicitor, Mr Perker, Mr Pickwick first feels the need of refreshment, and asking Sam where he can get it, receives from that worthy, whose knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar, as we all know, this direction :

"Second court on the right-hand side—last house but vun on the same side the vay—take the box as stands in the first fire-place, 'cos there an't no leg in the middle o' the table." Which court this was is not quite certain. If they had not got beyond the Poultry, it may have been Grocer's Hall Court ; if Mr Pickwick did not make his inquiry till

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they had reached Cheapside, probably Honey Court, next to Milk Street, was the place—indeed, I think it must have been; in any case the Freeman's Court, in Cheapside, which some have identified as the spot, could certainly not have been it, as that turning was on the opposite, or left-hand, side of the road, going west, and Sam expressly indicates the right hand.

Here, in a room "of a very homely description, and apparently under the special patronage of stage coachmen," Mr Pickwick is introduced to Sam Weller's father, the "old 'un," as his son terms him, who suggests to him that, as he makes known his intention of going to Ipswich, he had better travel by the coach tooled by Samuel senior, which was due to leave the Bull at Whitechapel in two days' time.

After paying the reckoning, Mr Pickwick resumed his walk to Gray's Inn, where Mr Perker's offices were situated. But Mr Perker was out, and so was his clerk, Lowten, who, however, had left a message, that should anyone want to see him particularly, he was to be found at the Magpie and Stump, a public-house in the vicinity of Clare Market, at the back of New Inn. The Magpie and Stump, whose "weather-beaten sign-board bore the half-obliterated semblance of a magpie intently eyeing a crooked streak of brown paint which the neighbours had been taught from infancy to consider as the stump," stood at the corner of Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, on the site afterwards occupied by the Black Jack tavern,<sup>1</sup> known as the Jump, from the legend that Jack Sheppard once escaped capture there by leaping from one of its windows. It was demolished in 1897.

That there should be no doubt about the ability of the establishment to fulfil its functions as a place of refreshment, "in the lower windows, which were decorated with curtains of a saffron hue, dangled two or three printed cards, bearing reference to Devonshire cyder and Dantzic spruce,

<sup>1</sup> The George the Fourth tavern, next door, has been generally regarded as the prototype of the Magpie and Stump, but I think the Black Jack has better claims.

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while a large black board, announcing in white letters to an enlightened public that there were 500,000 barrels of double stout in the cellars of the establishment, left the mind in a state of not unpleasing doubt and uncertainty as to the precise direction, in the bowels of the earth, in which the mighty cavern might be supposed to extend." Here Mr Lowten indulged in his evening orgies, and here it was that Mr Pickwick, being introduced by that gentleman to his cronies, and starting the subject of old inns in reference to his recent visit to Gray's Inn, sets Jack Bamber off on that series of reminiscences and stories with which Chapter XXI. is filled. "Curious little nooks in a great place, like London, these old inns are," is Mr Pickwick's remark. "By Jove," said the chairman, "you have hit upon something that one of us, at least, would talk upon for ever. You'll draw old Jack Bamber out; he was never heard to talk about anything else but the Inns, and he has lived alone in them till he's half crazy."

That series of reflections and incidents to which old Jack Bamber, mounted on his favourite hobby-horse, gives voice, including the strange discovery of the body of the tenant of chambers in Clifford's Inn, which he describes as "funny, but not uncommon," may be compared with the paper on "Chambers" in *The Uncommercial Traveller*. Clifford's Inn is not what it was in those days, although in spite of desecration and the erection of large buildings impinging on its old Hall, where Sir Matthew Hale and other judges sat to hear disputes about property after the Great Fire, and obliterating some of its ancient buildings, there still remains sufficient to make it one of the picturesque spots in London—a spot where Lamb's friend, George Dyer, lived and died, and where Samuel Butler wrote his *Way of All Flesh*, one of the great novels of our literature.

Jack Bamber was not content, however, merely to relate odd facts and fictions about the old inns; he crowned his story-telling with the tale of "The Queer Client," which, beginning with the Marshalsea (to which I shall draw special



attention in a later chapter), ends in a miserable room, in a mean-looking house, in a small by-street called Little College Street, off the old Pancras Road. This dreadful story of vengeance is thus associated with College Place, the present name for Little College Street, near the Veterinary College (mentioned by Dickens) in Great College Street ; and no one who knows the tale, and happens to be in that otherwise not very attractive neighbourhood, is likely to forget the facts. He may, indeed, search for the house in which Heyling had his last interview with his enemy, and if he finds it may ascend, perhaps, to the room in which that enemy eluded the last vengeance by a tragically sudden death.

The next morning Mr Pickwick and Sam set off for Ipswich from the Bull Inn, Whitechapel, then the great city terminus of coaches travelling to and from the north-east of England. Its proprietress was Mrs Anne Nelson, a famous character in those days, and it stood till 1868, when it was demolished, on the site of Aldgate Avenue. It possessed a long yard with galleries round it, and a low archway communicated with the street, as shown in one of Onwhyn's extra illustrations to *Pickwick*, and indeed indicated by Mr Weller senior's warning (like Jingle's at the Golden Cross) to "take care o' the archway, gen'lm'n. 'Heads,' as the pieman says." The coach-office later became a railway office, and the picturesque yard was divided into warehouses and tenements. As the coach rattled through Whitechapel Sam Weller remarks that it isn't "a wery nice neighbourhood"; and in a train of thought, induced by the presence of innumerable oyster-stalls, opines that "oysters and poverty seem to go together," in that "the poorer a place is the greater call there seems to be for oysters." "Look here, sir," he adds, "here's a oyster-stall to every half-dozen houses—the street's lined with 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings and eats oysters in reg'lar desperation." "To be sure he does," remarks Mr Weller senior, "and it's just the same vith pickled salmon." These two remarkable deductions had



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never occurred to Mr Pickwick, who announced his intention of making a note of them at the first stopping-place. The Mile End turnpike gives occasion for other notable facts to be enunciated by Mr Weller, who continues to enliven the journey with his experiences, until Ipswich and its famous "Great White Horse" are reached in safety.

When Mr Pickwick had accomplished the chief object of his visit to Ipswich—the exposure of Jingle—he determined to return to London in order to be ready for the proceedings which Messrs Dodson & Fogg were instituting against him. Arrived in the metropolis, he took up his abode "in very good, old-fashioned, and comfortable quarters, to wit, the George and Vulture Tavern and Hotel, George Yard, Lombard Street." This hostelry, closely connected with Mr Pickwick, for it seems to have been his chief headquarters after his removal from Goswell Street, was of very ancient origin; indeed Strype speaks of it: "Near Ball Alley was the George Inn, since the Fire rebuilt with very good houses, well inhabited, and warehouses, being a large open yard, and called George Yard, at the farther end of which is the George and Vulture Tavern, which is a large house and of a great trade, having a passage into St Michael's Alley."<sup>1</sup>

Edgar Pemberton, writing in 1876, speaks of the George and Vulture as then still existing, but under altered circumstances, it being known in his day as "Thomas's Chop-House," where chops and steaks were to be had in perfection, as the writer feelingly, or tastingly, testifies. In Mr Matz's delightful book on the *Inns and Taverns of Pickwick*, a chapter is devoted to this interesting link with Dickens and his most famous creation. It for long enjoyed a celebrity among literary men, and even so far back as the days of Henry VIII. it is mentioned by Skelton in some doggerel verses. The tavern, which can be approached either from Cornhill or Lombard Street, with its sign of the "Old Pickwickian Hostel" hanging high up over an upper window,

<sup>1</sup> George Inn is here evidently the generic name of the court, and not that of an inn, in our acceptance of the word.

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still preserves the odour of that association which has made it famous : there is a Pickwickian Room here, which tradition has it was the chamber occupied by the great man, memorials of whom fill it ; the city Pickwick Club holds its meetings here ; and the Dickens Fellowship has here repeatedly extended its hospitality.

No sooner is Mr Pickwick ensconced in his room at the George and Vulture than he sends Sam off to Goswell Street, to arrange about the removal of his possessions, when that faithful henchman learns certain facts concerning Messrs Dodson & Fogg's proceedings which he brings out at the Trial, with excellent effect, as we all know.

Mr Pickwick's visit to London is, however, but a flying one, for in two or three days, accompanied by his three friends and the indispensable Sam (who, in the meanwhile, has had leave of absence to visit his parent at the Marquis of Granby, at Dorking), he leaves to spend Christmas at Dingley Dell.

Chapter XXX. opens with a short dissertation on lawyers' clerks, their varieties and habits. "Scattered about, in various holes and corners of the Temple, are certain dark and dirty chambers, in and out of which, all the morning in Vacation, and half the evening too in Term time, there may be seen constantly hurrying with bundles of papers under their arms, and protruding from their pockets, an almost uninterrupted succession of Lawyers' Clerks." These clerks are of all kinds, from the article clerk "who knows a family in Gower Street, and another in Tavistock Square" (which would hardly in these days be considered a special claim to distinction—so much has fashion changed its *habitats*), "... to the office lads in their first surtouts . . . who think there's nothing like 'life.'" Among these, about ten days or so after the Pickwickians return from the country, was that Mr Jackson, of the firm of Dodson & Fogg, whom we meet, not going to his office, but directing his steps "to Sun Court, and walking straight into the George and Vulture," where he delivers "personal service" on Mr Pickwick, and

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*subpœnas* on the other Pickwickians,<sup>1</sup> in the forthcoming trial of Bardell *v.* Pickwick. The next morning Mr Pickwick, accompanied by Sam, sets forth for Mr Perker's chambers in Gray's Inn. His knowledge of London was not comparable with that of Mr Weller's, as, before he has gone far, he asks the way. "Up Newgate Street," replies Sam, in which thoroughfare he points out to his master the "very nice pork-shop" which he classifies as a "celebrated sassage factory," famous for the story which he proceeds to relate of the master of the shop, who "in a fit of temporary insanity converted himself into sausages."

From Perker's Mr Pickwick goes to see (against all precedent) Serjeant Snubbin, who has been briefed in his defence, in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn; the spot where Kenge & Carboy of *Bleak House* had also their offices. In the course of the consultation Mr Phunky, the junior counsel in the case, is sent for. His chambers were in Holborn Court, Gray's Inn, an address to which Dickens adds the information that it is "South Square now." In Horwood's plan it will be found marked Holborn Court; and we are reminded that originally Gray's Inn was divided into four courts, the other three being known as Coney Court, Field Court, and Chapel Court. Traddles, of *David Copperfield*, had also his rooms here; and here it was that Phunky walked up and down with Mr Pickwick and Mr Perker, and held a long conference.

In Chapter XXXI. we are introduced to Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen, in their room in Lant Street, Borough. This street was well known to Dickens because he had, as a boy, lodged there, what time his father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Recording this circumstance, he once wrote: "A back attic was found for me at the house of an Insolvent Court agent who lived in Lant Street, in the Borough, where Bob Sawyer lodged many years afterwards." So that the site of the house, later occupied by the Board School,

<sup>1</sup> Sun Court is a mistake on Dickens's part, it being on the opposite side of the road; George Yard would have been correct.

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adjoining No. 46, has a double Dickensian association ; and if, as is almost certain, David Copperfield also lodged there, a third.

Dickens thus describes the thoroughfare : “ There is an air of repose about Lant Street, which sheds a gentle melancholy upon the soul. A house in Lant Street would not come within the denomination of a first-rate residence, in the strict acceptance of the word ; but it is a most desirable spot nevertheless. If a man wished to abstract himself from the world, to remove himself from within the reach of temptation, to place himself beyond the possibility of any inducement to look out of the window, he should by all means go to Lant Street.”

Hither comes Mr Pickwick, true to his promise to call, to see the two medical students whom he had met at Dingley Dell, and who had told him that they lived in Lant Street, “ near Guy’s. . . . Little distance after you’ve passed St George’s Church—turns out of the High Street on the right-hand side of the way.” At the end of the evening Mr Ben Allen accompanies the party of Pickwickians as far as London Bridge, and making his way back, “ knocked double knocks at the door of the Borough Market Office, and took short naps on the steps alternately, till daybreak, under the firm impression that he lived there and had forgotten the key.” This market, for fruit and vegetables, lies immediately south of St Saviour’s, Southwark, and dates from the fourteenth century. It was abolished in 1755, but rebuilt in 1851, and further additions were made to it some twelve years later.

As the trial drew near, Sam was perpetually engaged in travelling from the George and Vulture to Mr Perker’s rooms in Gray’s Inn and back again, Mr Pickwick being in a highly nervous and excitable state, and continually writing notes to his lawyer as to the position of affairs. In the midst of these transactions Sam receives a message from old Weller, asking him to come to see him at the Blue Boar, Leadenhall Market, which, having obtained leave from Mr



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Pickwick, he proceeds to do; purchasing, on his way, a valentine (for it was the 13th of February), on which was depicted the well-known spire of All Souls', Langham Place.<sup>1</sup>

Arrived at Leadenhall Market, and looking round him, "he there beheld a sign-board on which the painter's art had delineated something remotely resembling a cerulean elephant with an aquiline nose in lieu of trunk. Rightly conjecturing that this was the Blue Boar himself, he stepped into the house."

It is difficult to say where exactly this tavern (old Weller's favourite house of call) was situated. Great changes have taken place in this locality. Some authorities regard the Green Dragon, in Bull's Head Passage, as its real prototype. I am inclined to think it may have been the Spread Eagle, whose premises and large yard are clearly shown in Horwood's plan (*circa* 1799), which had an entrance between what was in those days 83 and 84 Gracechurch Street, and could also be reached by one of the numerous by-ways in Leadenhall Market itself. Here Sam indites his valentine to Mary, the housemaid, at Mr Nupkins's, Ipswich, and here Mr Weller senior asserts his inalienable faith in "a alleybi" as being Mr Pickwick's best form of defence; and formulates a plan of campaign, on his own account, against Stiggins of the Brick Lane Branch o' the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association.

The great trial of Bardell *v.* Pickwick takes place at the Guildhall, where the Crown Courts were formerly held before the passing of the Judicature Act; but the Guildhall Court has, since the time of *Pickwick*, been rebuilt.

There is no necessity to recapitulate the incidents of that famous event here. If anything of Dickens is well known it is surely the trial scene in *Pickwick*, with Mr Justice Stareleigh's somnolence and Mr Serjeant Buzfuz's eloquence; the acting of Mrs Bardell, and the cross-questioning of Sam Weller; and all those incidents, so familiar in the atmosphere of the law, in which there is much talk and more

<sup>1</sup> Built by Nash, and consecrated in 1824.

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suspicion. One thing I would remind the reader of, if he requires reminding, and that is that the pregnant note ordering "chops and tomato sauce," is dated from Garraway's, which was situated in Exchange Alley, was known to Swift and Steele and Defoe, and has secured an even greater fame than this association, by being mentioned in the pages of *Pickwick*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Little Dorrit* and *The Uncommercial Traveller*.

As two months were to elapse before anything could be done in the way of incarcerating Mr Pickwick, he and his friends determine to go to Bath in the meanwhile ; and Sam is at once dispatched to the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, to secure places for the half-past seven coach the next morning.

The White Horse Cellar in those days was opposite its present site ; standing at the corner of Arlington Street, practically where Walsingham House used to be, and the Ritz is now. The new White Horse was pulled down in 1884, but Hatchett's underground restaurant is still known by the name to some old *habitués*.

Dickens gives us a vignette of the interior : " The travellers' room at the White Horse Cellar is of course uncomfortable ; it would be no travellers' room if it were not. It is the right-hand parlour, into which an aspiring kitchen fire-place appears to have walked, accompanied by a rebellious poker, tongs and shovel. It is divided into boxes, for the solitary confinement of travellers, and is furnished with a clock, a looking-glass and a live waiter, which latter article is kept in a small kennel for washing glasses, in a corner of the apartment." While Mr Pickwick and his friends were awaiting the coach in this environment, Sam Weller, outside, makes the astounding discovery that his master's name is painted on the coach-door—with, added insult, " Moses " before it.

On the conclusion of the Bath visit, Mr Pickwick returned to London, and again put up at the George and Vulture. There he is, on the third morning after his arrival, arrested by the sheriff's officer, Namby, of Bell Alley, Coleman Street. Bell Alley was properly Great Bell Alley (Horwood

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shows it as such), and leads from Moorgate Street to Coleman Street. This part has been so rebuilt that it is difficult to imagine what it was like in Mr Pickwick's day ; for then no Moorgate Street existed, and Coleman Street was the only direct thoroughfare connecting Moorfields with Lothbury. It was a very dark and narrow street into which the coach bearing Mr Pickwick, Sam, and the sheriff's unsavoury man, Smouch, turned, and stopped before a house with iron bars to all the windows ; the door-posts of which were graced by the name and title of "Namby, Officer to the Sheriffs of London." Here the party were shown into a "coffee-room," really "a front parlour, the principal features of which were fresh sand and stale tobacco-smoke."<sup>1</sup> In due course Mr Pickwick is carried away to Serjeants' Inn, Chancery Lane,<sup>2</sup> where two judges were then sitting, one on King's Bench matters, the other on Common Pleas.

After innumerable forms and observances Mr Pickwick is finally carried away to the Fleet Prison, there to be detained "until the amount of the damages and costs in the action of Bardell against Pickwick was fully paid and satisfied," and our hero finds himself under lock and key in this once famous stronghold.

The annals of the Fleet Prison have been written. The place enters largely not only into the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but has been a *motif* for many stories, and has secured a place in some of the outstanding works of our literature. There is, therefore, no need to enlarge upon it here. It is sufficient to say that it stood

<sup>1</sup> The Whitecross Prison referred to in this chapter (xxxix.), in connection with Mr Price, was in Whitecross Street, leading from Fore Street to Old Street ; a careful account of the place, which was entirely a debtors' prison, is given by Hepworth Dixon in his *London Prisons*, 1850.

<sup>2</sup> There were two Serjeants' Inns—that in Chancery Lane, the one in question, and one in Fleet Street, the former being known as Far-rington Inn, till 1484. It was next to Clifford's Inn. About the year 1878 the inn was disposed of by the Serjeants-at-Law ; and in 1909, what was left of it was again put up to auction and again sold. See the author's *Annals of Fleet Street*.





THE FLEET PRISON  
AFTER ROWLANDSON AND FUGIN





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in Farringdon Street, originally Fleet Market, on the right of what is now the Memorial Hall, and that its "rules" were bounded by Fleet Lane, the Old Bailey and Ludgate Hill. It was destroyed in the Great Fire; rebuilt; again demolished in the Gordon Riots; and re-erected in 1781-1782. It was purchased by the Corporation in 1844, and the prison abolished. As known to Mr Pickwick, it was a large plain brick building of five storeys, its chief front running parallel with Fleet Market, as is shown in numerous prints and drawings.

"The tipstaff, looking over his shoulder to see that his charge was following close at his heels, preceded Mr Pickwick into the prison; turning to the left, after they had entered, they passed through an open door into a lobby, from which a heavy gate opposite to that by which they had entered, and which was guarded by a stout turnkey with the key in his hand, led at once into the interior of the prison." In these words does Dickens describe the entry into the Fleet of what must surely be regarded as its most notable prisoner. Here Mr Pickwick "sat for his portrait"; after which ceremony he was led "through the inner gate, and descended a short flight of steps. The key was turned after them; and Pickwick found himself, for the first time in his life, within the walls of a debtors' prison."

Of Mr Pickwick's experiences in the Fleet, of his way of life, of the company he kept, and of the wonderful stories he heard and sights he saw, there is no necessity to speak; for these things are a part of the tale, and hardly enter into an account of its connection with London landmarks. It is not far to go, however, to Portugal Street, where the Commissioners of the Insolvent Court were wont to sit "in a lofty room, badly lighted and worse ventilated"; or to the tavern opposite—the Horse and Groom, long since gone the way of all picturesque London brick and mortar—where the two Wellers and Mr Solomon Pell, one of the aforesaid Commissioners, concoct that little plot by which Sam is consigned to the Fleet, at the instance of his father, in order to look

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after Mr Pickwick. When the arrangements for that delightful fiction have been arranged, a party, consisting of the Wellers, walking arm in arm, an officer in front and a bevy of eight stout coachmen bringing up the rear, passed along Fleet Street to the prison ; halting, however, at Serjeants' Inn Coffee-house for refreshment. Serjeants' Inn, Fleet Street, was reconstructed in 1838, when the façade, which has in recent days been replaced by another, was added. The coffee-house, which was close to the entrance of the inn, was then destroyed ; so that the convivial party here recorded must have been held during its last few years of existence.<sup>1</sup>

When the party, consisting of Mrs Bardell and her offspring, the Raddles and Mrs Cluppins, arranged to go to the Spaniards, on Hampstead Heath, they were doing something which Dickens himself was fond of, for in his letters are many appointments with friends to make an excursion to that celebrated hostelry. The fame of the place still endures ; but its great period was in those earlier days when poets lived about the Heath, and later when the great novelist patronised it.<sup>2</sup> That excursion of the Bardell party, begun so joyously, has a miserable termination ; for as they are sitting in one of the arbours of the tea garden (the scene is well depicted by Onwhyn) Mr Jackson, of Dodson & Fogg's, accompanied by a shabby man in black leggings, appears, and under pretence of requiring Mrs Bardell on important business at his office carries her away to the Fleet Prison, where she is taken in execution for the costs in the case of *Bardell v. Pickwick*.

The result of this unexpected development, is known to all

<sup>1</sup> Tallis's view of this part of Fleet Street shows the entrance to Serjeants' Inn, with a bow-windowed shop next to it, and forming a portion of the building, but it is there marked as in the occupation of Dodson, Cutler. It seems probable, therefore, that the coffee-house was just inside the entrance to the Inn, and thus would not come into Tallis's scheme.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that when the Raddles drive up to Mrs Bardell's, there is a difference of opinion as to whether it is the house with the green or yellow door ; it proves to be that with a red door.

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readers of the book. How Mr Perker<sup>1</sup> comes and argues with Mr Pickwick, with a view to getting him to pay the costs (greatly reduced by some means) and thus to free both Mrs Bardell and himself ; how the arrival of Winkle with Mrs Winkle (*née* Arabella Wardle) and their prayers to their old friend, backed by those of Tupman and Snodgrass, to intercede with old Wardle, which can only be done by a personal interview, at last overcomes his determination to remain *on principle*,<sup>2</sup> in the Fleet, are known to every reader, and that very evening, accompanied by the cheers of the prisoners, to so many of whom he had proved a friend, Mr Pickwick departs from the unsavoury place of durance, having first dispensed all his available cash in twenty-five gallons of mild porter, obtained from the “whistling shop” in the prison itself, which he dispensed to everybody in the racket court attached to that institution.<sup>3</sup>

That night was spent at the George and Vulture, and the next morning Sam and his master leave in a comfortable post-coach, which deposits them at the abode of Messrs Bob Sawycr and Ben Allen, then at Bristol, where all sorts of alarums and excursions take place, quite foreign to the object of this book. Nor are we concerned with the doings of Mr Pickwick at Bristol or at Birmingham, whither he subsequently goes. Indeed, there are but few London allusions remaining to which it is necessary to advert. The chief is the presence of old Wardle at Osborne’s Hotel, Adelphi, whence he goes to Mr Perker’s chambers, and there communicates the intelligence of Emily Wardle’s attachment to Snodgrass.

Osborne’s Hotel is in John Street—I say is, for the Adelphi

<sup>1</sup> Mr Perker has to be sent for from his private house in Montague Place, Russell Square.

<sup>2</sup> By the way, apropos of this “principle,” the story Sam tells of the man who eats crumpets on principle, enables me to remind the reader that that worthy lived in Kensington.

<sup>3</sup> One side of this racket court was “formed by the wall of the prison itself, the other by that portion of the prison which looked (or rather would have looked but for the wall) towards St Paul’s Cathedral.” See *Pickwick*, Chapter XLV.



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Hotel, at the corner of the street, which may still be visited, is essentially the same thing. It had been originally known as "The Adelphi New Tavern and Coffee-House," and was opened in 1777. Ten years later Gibbon put up here on his return from Lausanne, and Isaac D'Israeli and Crabbe, the poet, were both known here. But the hotel's most enduring memory is connected with *Pickwick*; not only as being the place where the climax to the story occurred, but also as that where Mr Pickwick made known his intention of finally retiring to Dulwich, and announced the dissolution of the Pickwick Club.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One or two other London allusions require a word or two. Thus Catcaton Street, mentioned in "The Bagman's Story," and also in "The Story of the Bagman's Uncle," was originally Catte Street (Stow). In 1845 the portion from Old Jewry to Milk Street was renamed Gresham Street. It is referred to in the original advertisement to *Pickwick*, together with Lothbury and Huggin Lane.

The Belle Sauvage, of which old Weller said he was a parishioner, was the famous coaching inn in Ludgate Hill, demolished in 1873 to make way for the premises of Messrs Cassell, Petter & Galpin. The Regency Park is, of course, the Regent's Park, laid out in 1812 from the designs of Nash, who, with Decimus Buxton, was the architect of the chief surrounding groups of terraced houses.

The Horn Coffee-House, in Doctors' Commons, to which Mr Pickwick sends from the Flect for a couple of bottles of wine, was in Carter Lane, once a well-known resort for city men, a portion of whose building is still standing. The Horn Tavern, 29 Knightrider Street, is its successor.



LONDON BRIDGE, THE SOUTHWARK SIDE  
AFTER E. W. COOKE. 1833



## V

## OLIVER TWIST (1838)

*Oliver Twist* was Dickens's first attempt at a regular novel. *Pickwick* had been begun merely as a series of sketches linked together by the flimsiest of chains, and although during its progress it assumed more the characteristics of a systematic story, it really never became anything but the great middle-class epic which it remains, evolved in terms of a series of tales and incidents capable of revealing the manners and customs of its epoch. With *Oliver Twist* Dickens was on surer ground. He knew exactly from the first what he intended to do ; he carried out his plan without any of those extraneous departures from the narrative which are to be met with in *Pickwick* ; and he traced the life of his hero through a variety of incidents all calculated to develop his character. Although in the book certain abuses are exposed and certain public offices and men shown up, I do not think that Dickens set out to do this in the way he subsequently did in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*. Indeed I am not sure whether *Oliver Twist* is not as purely a story, as differentiated from a tract in twenty-four monthly parts, as *David Copperfield* was, and as *Edwin Drood* was intended to be. As an initial attempt at novel-writing, it is one of its author's most remarkable books ; for, although it reveals here and there the 'prentice hand, and is occasionally disfigured by that kind of writing from which Dickens gradually emancipated himself, it possesses the essentials of a work of genius. The characterisation is strong and vivid—Fagin and Sikes and Nancy are outstanding and immortal figures, and if Mr Brownlow is a bit invertebrate and Monks a bit "steep," they are, after all, but shadows surrounding the protagonists, and useful as bringing out



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the more careful brushwork and colouring of the chief characters.

That the book is an unpleasant one was inevitable. It deals with unpleasant sides of our complex life; just as the London it portrays is chiefly that underworld which congregated in thieves' dens and doss-houses, and whose area includes Whitechapel and Jacob's Island. This characteristic is the more marked because, unlike the later books, its humour is far to seek. It is, as it were, all in shadow, and Mr Bumble, who may be supposed to represent an attempt at a grim sort of humour, is really not humorous at all—indeed quite the reverse; while Claypole is one of those insufferable puppies with whose fortunes no one can possibly have the least sympathy.

But it would be a great mistake to place *Oliver Twist* in the same category as such a book as *Jack Sheppard*, for instance, simply because its protagonists are thieves and ruffians. There is in it no attempt to glorify such things, or to make a kind of popular hero out of Bill Sikes. Indeed it is a great indictment of crime; a terrible picture of the misery that crime begets.

The London to which Oliver trudges from that town in whose workhouse he began his existence, is the London of the last years of William the Fourth's reign. We do not reach it till Chapter VIII., having hitherto been in the atmosphere of the provincial workhouse and the undertaker's shop: in the company of Mr Bumble and Mr Sowerberry and their associates.

Oliver, on his long journey, after some hundred miles or so from the north have been traversed, falls in with Mr John Dawkins, otherwise "The Artful Dodger" at Barnet, and in his company proceeds to London, arriving between ten and eleven o'clock at night by way of Islington turnpike; the Angel and St John's Road; Sadler's Wells Theatre, "across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole"; thence by Little Saffron Hill, Saffron Hill the Great, to Field Lane: "The street was

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very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops ; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out of the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper, amid the general blight of the place, were the public-houses ; and in them the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth ; and from several of the doorways great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearance, on no very well-disposed or harmless errands."

It was amid such surroundings that Oliver was introduced, at a house in Field Lane, to Fagin and his crew, and here for a time he was kept closely guarded. All this neighbourhood then had so bad a reputation that the clergymen of the parish, when visiting it, were obliged to be accompanied by a policeman in plain clothes. It runs from Field Lane into Vine Street, but part of it was cleared away for the Clerkenwell improvements, and what remains is very different from what it was when Dickens wrote his tremendous, but not exaggerated, indictment.<sup>1</sup>

After a spell of picking marks out of handkerchiefs, Oliver, it will be remembered, was permitted to make his first expedition with the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates. They had gone some distance and "were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square of Clerkenwell, which is yet called, by some strange perversion of terms, 'The Green,'" when the old gentleman, known to us afterwards as Mr Brownlow, is discovered immersed in a book at a stall close by. We all know what happened : how the Dodger steals the old gentleman's handkerchief, and Oliver, who has witnessed the act, is pursued as being the real thief.

<sup>1</sup> For a vivid description of this part, see *The Rookeries of London*, by Thomas Beames, 1850, where there is a vignette showing old Field Lane.

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After one of those long hues and cries, punctuated by shouts of "Stop thief," which were common enough then, the wretched Oliver is run to earth, and is incontinently haled off to the neighbouring police office, as it was called, down a place known as Mutton Hill,<sup>1</sup> where the notorious magistrate whom Dickens disguises as Mr Fang was wont to sit and maladminister justice. Mr E. T. Jaques first identified No. 54 Hatton Garden as the police office mentioned by Dickens; and the archway beneath which Oliver was taken to it is still in existence, leading to Hatton Yard.

The absurd travesty of justice at which Dickens tilts was a daily occurrence under the ægis of Mr Fang, whose methods of browbeating and general brutality of behaviour were eventually to evoke the animadversions of the authorities.

After threatening Oliver and vilifying Mr Brownlow, this precious magistrate can find no real cause for remanding the boy, who is thereupon taken by his unwilling accuser in a cab to his own house "in a quiet shady street near Pentonville." Mr Bags, Yellowplush's first employer, lived here, it will be remembered. It was then an outlying suburb named after the ground landlord, Mr Penton, and as yet innocent of the prison which Major Jebb designed about 1840.

In the meanwhile the Dodger and Bates return home to the Jew, in some fear at having lost their companion. The fury of Fagin is beyond bounds, and during his access of rage, Bill Sikes makes his appearance. It becomes necessary to find out what has happened at the police court, and Nancy, coming in opportunely, is persuaded to venture to these precincts for that purpose, as having only recently removed to the neighbourhood of Field Lane from Ratcliffe, and thus not being known to the authorities as were Fagin and his band. After vainly endeavouring to find out what has become of Oliver, Nancy succeeds in eliciting the actual facts, and thus learns that he has been taken away by the old

<sup>1</sup> It was a haunt of courtesans in old days, and as they were called "laced muttons," hence the name.

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gentleman to the neighbourhood of Pentonville, whereupon Fagin tells Bates and the Dodger to try to discover his actual whereabouts.

How Oliver is cared for and nursed by old Mr Brownlow and his housekeeper Mrs Bedwin ; how the suspicious friend of the former, Mr Grimwig, affects to distrust the boy, who is sent on an errand to the bookseller, and never returns, are incidents recorded in Chapter XIV., which provides no London references needing annotation. In the following chapter the recapture of Oliver by Nancy is recorded. He had missed his way, in some by-streets in Clerkenwell, when the girl sees him, and crying out loudly that she has found "her long-lost little brother," succeeds, with the help of Sikes, who is close by, in carrying the wretched boy back to Fagin's den. They had passed through Smithfield on their way, and Sikes remarks how it was "Bartlemy time" when he was "shopped," and he adds, "there warn't a penny trumpet in the fair as I couldn't hear the squeaking on."

This remark, which would be pointless now, refers of course to the annual Bartholomew Fair held in these precincts, when the prison stood adjacent, and men were, inside, awaiting the dawn of a last awful morning, while the square was a pandemonium of noise and riotous vociferation.

It was not, this time, to Field Lane, but to a house in Whitechapel, that Oliver was convoyed by his captors. From Smithfield the party went "by little frequented and dirty ways, for a full half-hour," we are told, at length turning into "a very narrow filthy street nearly full of old-clothes shops." The building was in keeping with its surroundings : "It was a very dirty place. The rooms upstairs had great high wooden chimney-pieces and large doors, with panelled walls and cornices to the ceilings, which, although they were black with neglect and dust, were ornamented in various ways. . . . Spiders had built their webs in the angles of the walls and ceilings ; and sometimes . . . mice would scamper across the floor, and run back terrified to



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their holes. . . . In all the rooms the mouldering shutters were fast closed, and the bars which held them were screwed tight into the wood ; the only light which was admitted, stealing its way through round holes at the top.” Indeed the place had evidently once been a mansion of no small importance, as Oliver supposed, but had become derelict as fashion moved westward.

In the following chapter we have Fagin making his way towards Spitalfields, and finally reaching Bethnal Green, on a visit to Sikes, when the robbery of the house at Chertsey was decided on, and Oliver selected as one of the marauding party.<sup>1</sup>

The description of the road which Sikes and Oliver took when proceeding to Chertsey gives so vivid a picture of the appearance of one of London’s main arteries, on an early morning, that I shall transcribe Dickens’s words *in extenso*.

“By the time they had turned into the Bethnal Green Road the day had fairly begun to break. Many of the lamps were already extinguished ; a few country waggons were slowly toiling on towards London ; now and then a stage-coach, covered with mud, rattled briskly by. . . . The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open. By degrees other shops began to be unclosed, and a few scattered people were met with. Then came straggling groups of labourers going to their work ; then, men and women with fish-baskets on their heads ; donkey-carts laden with vegetables ; chaise-carts filled with live stock or whole carcasses of meat ; milk-women with pails ; an unbroken concourse of people, trudging out with various supplies to the eastern suburbs of the town. As they approached the City the noise and traffic gradually increased ; and when they threaded the streets between Shoreditch and Smithfield, it had swelled into a roar of sound and bustle. . . .

“Turning down Sun Street and Crown Street, and crossing Finsbury Square, Mr Sikes struck, by way of Chiswell Street,

<sup>1</sup> Sikes speaks of Covent Garden as Common Garden during the conversation reported in this chapter.

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into Barbican; thence into Long Lane; and so into Smithfield."

Here one may halt for a moment to say a word about this neighbourhood and the streets mentioned, as they were at this period.

Chiswell Street is described by Tallis (1838) as "a very important thoroughfare of respectable shops," and as being "celebrated for the extensive foundry established by Mr Caslon for the manufacture of printing type." Whittock's elevation confirms the former remark; and among the buildings is to be noticed, at No. 4, a public-house with the rather unusual sign of the Pied Horse—a sign, by the way, overlooked by the generally comprehensive Larwood and Hotten. Long Lane was a narrow and crowded street, consisting, then, chiefly of second-rate retail shops. All the neighbourhood of West Smithfield has greatly changed since the days when Sikes and Oliver passed through it; the market as described by Dickens being superseded by the cattle market in Copenhagen Fields, the last market being held in Smithfield on 11th June 1855. All sorts of other alterations and improvements have taken place here, the chief of which was the construction of the Central Meat Market, opened in 1868.

The picture Dickens gives us of the place under conditions that no longer obtain, has almost the significance of an historical document of manners and customs:

"The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-pots, hung heavily above. All the pens in the centre of the large area, and as many temporary pens as could be crowded into the vacant space, were filled with sheep; tied up to posts by the gutter-side were long lines of beasts and oxen, three or four deep. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a dense mass. The whistling of drovers, the barking of dogs, the bellowing

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and plunging of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs; the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarrelling on all sides; the ringing of bells and the roar of voices that issued from every public-house; the crowding, pushing, driving, beating, whooping, and yelling; the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market; and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng, rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses."

Shouldering their way through this turmoil, Sikes and Oliver made their way by Hosier Lane,<sup>1</sup> into Holborn. Thence they reached Hyde Park Corner. On their way to Kensington they obtained a lift in a cart which set them down near the Coach and Horses, beyond Brentford.

The burglary at Chertsey, told with such dramatic effect in the following chapter (XXII.), and the contents of the three succeeding chapters, need not detain us, as they possess nothing bearing on our particular subject. In Chapter XXVI., however, we find Fagin, fresh from the news of the failure of the attempted robbery, hurrying off to one of those public-houses—in this case, called the Three Cripples—which then served as much for a rendezvous of thieves and house-breakers as for the sale of liquor, and where Bill Sikes and his dog were well-known figures. This house was situated in the district of Saffron Hill, which I have already described, but its name is fictitious. Dickens's picture of the neighbourhood may, however, be given with advantage.

"Near to the spot on which Snow Hill<sup>2</sup> and Holborn Hill meet, there opens, upon the right hand as you come out of

<sup>1</sup> Hosier Lane was a place of great antiquity, being mentioned so early as 1367. Strype speaks of it as being "not over-well built or inhabited," and adds that, during Bartholomew Fair, it was "a place of great resort, all the houses generally being made Publick for Tippling and Lewd sort of people."

<sup>2</sup> Cleared away in 1867, when the Viaduct was made.

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the City, a narrow and dismal alley leading to Saffron Hill. In its filthy shops are exposed for sale huge bunches of second-hand silk handkerchiefs, of all sizes and patterns; for here reside the traders who purchase them from pick-pockets. Hundreds of these handkerchiefs hang dangling from pegs outside the windows, or flaunting from the door-posts; and the shelves within are piled with them. Confined as the limits of Field Lane are, it has its barber, its coffee-shop, its beer-shop, and its fried-fish warehouse. It is a commercial colony of itself: the emporium of petty larceny: visited at early morning, and setting-in of dusk, by silent merchants, who traffic in dark back-parlours, and who go as strangely as they come. Here the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag-merchant display their goods, as sign-boards to the petty thief; here stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildewy fragments of woollen stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars."

The succeeding chapters record the doings of Mr Bumble and Mrs Corney, the escape of Sikes, and the capture of Oliver, and his introduction to Mrs Maylie and Rose, together with other matters, such as the appearance of that very shadowy character Monks, which carry on the story, but do not specially concern us. Nor, indeed, have we anything particular to note, except the introduction into the tale of Harry Maylie, the reappearance of Monks, and other incidents with which all readers of the book are acquainted, until we reach Chapter XL., where Nancy comes to the West End hotel, and reveals to Rose the conspiracy of Monks, and other matters material to the conduct of the plot. At that interview the assignation is made at London Bridge. Oliver also tells Rose that he has found out where his earlier benefactor was then staying—namely, at 39 Craven Street,<sup>1</sup> Strand; and she and the boy take a hackney-coach and go off to see him.

<sup>1</sup> Craven Street was not opened to the Embankment till 1876. The number of Mr Brownlow's house here given is generally accepted as the correct one.



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In Chapter XLII. we come across the egregious Noah Claypole, now married to Miss Charlotte Sowerberry, arrived in London after having pilfered old Sowerberry's till, and putting up at the very Three Cripples already alluded to. The passage describing the arrival of Claypole and his wife in London is interesting :

"Mr Claypole went on without halting until he arrived at the Angel at Islington, where he wisely judged, from the crowd of passengers and number of vehicles, that London began in earnest. Just pausing to observe which appeared the most crowded streets, and consequently the most to be avoided, he crossed into St John's Road, and was soon deep in the obscurity of the intricate and dirty ways which, lying between Gray's Inn Lane and Smithfield, render that part of the town one of the lowest and worst that improvement has left in the midst of London."

We then learn how Claypole proceeded, "now stepping into the kennel to embrace at a glance the whole external character of some small public-house, and now jogging on again, as some fancied appearance induced him to believe it too public for his purpose. At length he stopped in front of one, more humble in appearance and more dirty than any he had yet seen ; and, having crossed over and surveyed it from the opposite pavement, graciously announced his intention of putting up there for the night."

It was here, at the Three Cripples, that he had his first interview with Fagin and became enrolled, as Mr Morris Bolter, one of the band under that worthy's direction, carefully stipulating that any job he should be put to should be one entailing no danger and as little physical effort as possible.

In the meanwhile the Dodger has fallen into the hands of justice, and is to make his bow to the magistrate at Bow Street. "We must know how he gets on to-day, by some handy means or other. Let me think," says Fagin. The result of his cogitations is that Claypole, being at present unknown to the authorities, shall be the one chosen for

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a job which, being neither dangerous nor onerous, Noah is pleased to accept.

Dressed for the part he arrives at Bow Street, in the guise of a countryman from Covent Garden, and, under Charley Bates's guidance, soon gains the magisterial presence. "He found himself jostled among a crowd of people, chiefly women, who were huddled together in a dirty, frowzy room, at the upper end of which was a raised platform railed off from the rest with a dock for the prisoners on the left hand against the wall, a box for the witnesses in the middle, and a desk for the magistrates on the right; the awful locality last named being screened off by a partition which concealed the bench from the common gaze, and left the vulgar to imagine (if they could) the full majesty of justice."

The Bow Street Police Court of *Oliver Twist* was on the west side of the street, a house of four storeys, which had been erected in 1825, on the site of the Brown Bear public-house. Extant views show both these buildings, and in them the Bow Street runners, who, as Dickens says in one of his letters, "ceased out of the land after the introduction of the new police," are depicted. The novelist says he remembered seeing them "standing about the door of the office in Bow Street," and he adds: "They had no other uniform than a blue dress-coat, brass buttons, and a bright red cloth waistcoat. The waistcoat was indispensable, and the slang name for them was 'red breasts,' in consequence."<sup>1</sup>

The appointment made by Rose to meet Nancy at London Bridge, and there to hear the secret of Monks's connection with Oliver, is kept in Chapter XLVI., Nancy being shadowed by Claypole himself. There are one or two word-pictures of the locality which should find a place here, although it is not needful to recapitulate what took place, as the reader will doubtless remember that for himself, or will not thank me for anticipating his re-reading it.

"A mist," writes Dickens, "hung over the river,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Walter Thornbury, 18th April 1862.

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deepening the red glare of fires that burnt upon the small craft moored off the different wharfs, and rendering darker and more indistinct the mirky buildings on the banks. The old smoke-stained storehouses on either side rose heavy and dull from the dense mass of roofs and gables, and frowned sternly upon water too black to reflect even their lumbering shapes. The tower of old Saint Saviour's church, and the spire of Saint Magnus, so long the giant-warders of the ancient bridge, were visible in the gloom; but the forest of shipping below the bridge, and the thickly scattered spires of churches above, were nearly all hidden from the sight."

The London Bridge of the story, I may observe, was the structure that had been designed by Rennie, and opened by William IV. on 1st August 1831.

In order to be less observed Nancy suggests that the party (Rose accompanied by Mr Brownlow and herself) shall descend the steps by the side of the bridge, leading to the water. "The steps to which the girl had pointed were those which, on the Surrey bank, and on the same side of the river as Saint Saviour's church, form a landing-stairs from the river. . . . These stairs are a part of the bridge; they consist of three flights.<sup>1</sup> Just below the end of the second, going down, the stone wall on the left terminates in an ornamental pilaster facing towards the Thames. At this point the lower steps widen, so that a person turning that angle of the wall is necessarily unseen by any others on the stairs who chance to be above him, if only a step." It was here that the spy took up his position, hoping to overhear whatever might be said by the others. The particularity with which Dickens describes the exact place of assignation enables us to know the precise spot where this meeting, so momentous and, to one of the party, so tragic in its results, took place.

The murder of Nancy in the wretched room inhabited by her and Sikes, in Whitechapel, that terrific scene with the reading of which its author was wont to electrify his audiences, is told in Chapter XLVII. In the following

<sup>1</sup> See Cruikshank's illustration in *Oliver Twist*.

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chapter the almost equally graphic and terrible account of the murderer's flight is portrayed in masterly fashion. It is, perhaps, the high-water mark of the book, in its combination of physical effort allied with mental struggle; in the dual attempt of the villain to get away at once from his foul deed and his haunting fears and fancies.

"He went through Islington; strode up the hill at Highgate on which stands the stone in honour of Whittington; turned down to Highgate Hill, unsteady of purpose, and uncertain where to go; struck off to the right again, almost as soon as he began to descend it; and taking the footpath across the fields, skirted Caen Wood, and so came out on Hampstead Heath. Traversing the hollow by the Vale of Health, he mounted the opposite bank, and crossing the road which joins the villages of Hampstead and Highgate, made along the remaining portion of the Heath to the fields at North End, in one of which he laid himself down under a hedge, and slept."

He is soon up again however; but backwards and forwards, uncertain which way to go in order best to avoid observation. He thinks of Hendon, not far off, and out of most people's way, and thither he flies; but the people he met seemed to regard him with suspicion; and he turns back. Wandering over miles and miles of ground, he keeps coming again to the old place. At last he gets away and makes a course for Hatfield. We need not follow the wretch in his wanderings; suffice it to say that he at last takes the desperate resolution of returning to London.

In Chapter L. we come to the scene of the felon's end, in Jacob's Island. Here again Dickens shall describe for himself. What he tells us of is a part of London that has long been blotted out of existence, and his words have therefore both an historical and topographical value:

"Near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest, and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built low-roofed houses, there



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exists . . . the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London, wholly unknown, even by name, to the great mass of its inhabitants.

“To reach this place, the visitor has to penetrate through a maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets, thronged by the roughest and poorest of water-side people, and devoted to the traffic they may be supposed to occasion. The cheapest and least delicate provisions are heaped in the shops ; the coarsest and commonest of wearing apparel dangle at the salesman’s door, and stream from the house-parapet and windows. Jostling with unemployed labourers of the lowest class, ballast-heavers, coal-whippers, brazen women, ragged children, and the very raff and refuse of the river, he makes his way with difficulty along, assailed by offensive sights and smells from the narrow alleys which branch off on the right and left, and deafened by the clash of ponderous waggons that bear great piles of merchandise from the stacks of warehouses that rise from every corner. Arriving, at length, in streets remoter and less frequented than those through which he has passed, he walks beneath tottering house-fronts projecting over the pavement, dismantled walls that seem to totter as he passes, chimneys half crushed, half hesitating to fall, windows guarded by rusty iron bars that time and dirt have almost eaten away, and every imaginable sign of desolation and neglect.

“In such a neighbourhood beyond Dockhead, in the Borough of Southwark, stands Jacob’s Island, surrounded by a muddy ditch, six or eight feet deep, and fifteen or twenty wide when the tide is in, once called Mill Pond, but known in these days as Folly Ditch. It is a creek or inlet from the Thames, and can always be filled at high water by opening the sluices at the Lead Mills from which it took its old name. At such times a stranger, looking from one of the wooden bridges thrown across it at Mill Lane, will see the inhabitants of the houses on either side lowering, from their back doors and windows, buckets, pails, domestic utensils of all kinds, in which to haul the water up ; and

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when his eye is turned from these operations to the houses themselves, his utmost astonishment will be excited by the scene before him. Crazy wooden galleries common to the backs of half-a-dozen houses, with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath; windows broken and patched, with poles thrust out on which to dry the linen that is never there; rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem too tainted even for the dirt and squalor which they shelter; wooden chambers thrusting themselves out above the mud, and threatening to fall into it, as some have done; dirt-besmeared walls and decaying foundations; every repulsive lineament of poverty, every loathsome indication of filth, rot, and garbage;—all these ornament the banks of Folly Ditch.

“In Jacob’s Island the warehouses are roofless and empty; the walls are crumbling down; the windows are windows no more; the doors are falling into the streets; the chimneys are blackened, but they yield no smoke. Thirty or forty years ago, before losses and chancery suits came upon it, it was a thriving place; but now it is a desolate island indeed. The houses have no owners; they are broken open, and entered upon by those who have the courage; and there they live, and there they die. They must have powerful motives for a secret residence, or be reduced to a destitute condition indeed, who seek a refuge in Jacob’s Island.”

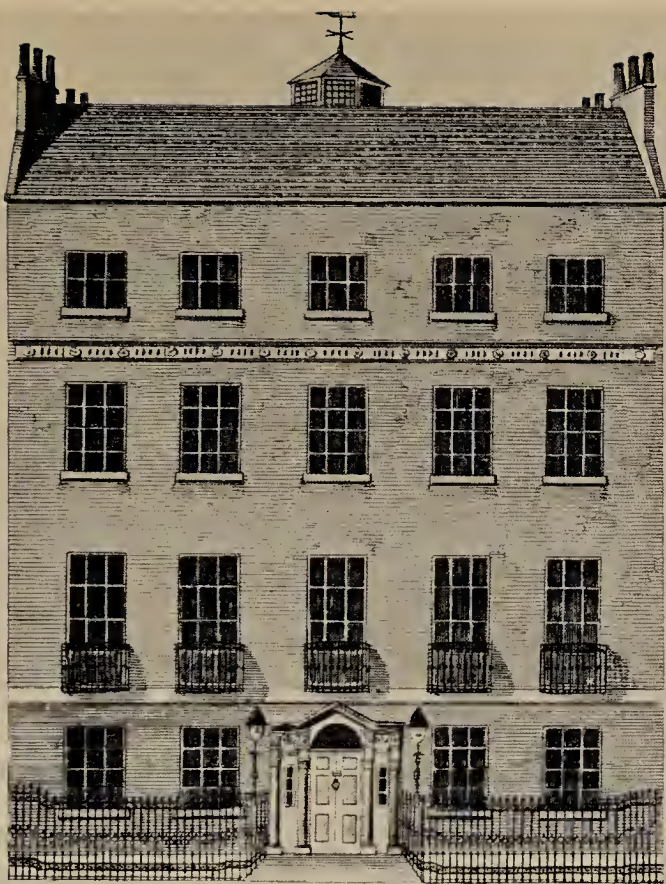
The actual house visited by Sikes has been identified as being at the back of 18 Eckell Street, in Metcalf Yard, now used as stables. Jacob’s Island itself lay to the east of St Saviour’s Dock, between Dock Head and London Street and the river. The actual locality exists, but improvements have altered it. Even in 1850 a certain London alderman publicly stated that it did not exist and never had. Dickens in his preface of 1867, to a new edition of *Oliver Twist*, records this, and adds that even then it remained, “though much improved and changed.”

In an upper room in one of the derelict hovels described

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by Dickens, are assembled three men—Toby Crackit, Chitling, and Kags (who is new to the story). They are discussing the murder, the apprehension of Fagin, and other cognate matters, when they are joined by Charley Bates. Almost directly after, Bill Sikes enters, and is set upon by Bates. But the struggle is put an end to by the noise outside. The murderer has been tracked, and is at last brought to bay. He seeks, as the reader knows, one last means of safety by lowering himself into the ditch with a rope attached to the chimney-stack; but at the instant of putting this scheme into execution, he looks for a moment behind him, and sees in his delirium Nancy's eyes fixed upon him. Uttering an unearthly shriek, he staggers, falls, and is hanged by the rope with which he had hoped to escape.

The remainder of the story hardly concerns us here. Fagin in the condemned cell at Newgate is the last terrible picture in what is, in the main, a terrible book. It is, too, the last link with London; and the travelling carriage that bears Mrs Maylie and Rose and Oliver, with Mr Brownlow in a post-chaise following, to the hero's native town, takes us far from the city where he had undergone so many and such tragic adventures.



SURGEON NORTON'S HOUSE, GOLDEN SQUARE  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY LONG





## VI

### NICHOLAS NICKLEBY (1839)

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY seems to me to mark a transition between Dickens's earlier style and his more matured period. Had he not gone on improving in writing and characterisation, he might have done no better than this when penning *Copperfield* or *Bleak House*. The book is essentially youthful, both in its portrayal of types and in its exaggerations. It is full of good things; it bears upon it, here and there, the impress of its writer's peculiar genius. But it somehow seems to lack the essential qualities of a great book. It is overdrawn, just as Phiz's illustrations to it were overdrawn. The Crummles episode is delightful fooling, but it is only that. We cannot quite take Vincent and his family and his troupe seriously. Mulberry Hawk and Frederick Verisopht are as theatrical as their names. For me the really great character in the book is Mrs Nickleby, because she resumes in herself the characteristics of a class which is perennial. The work smacks of its period more obviously even than does *Pickwick* or *Oliver Twist*. That period was, however, an interesting one so far as London is concerned, and as a document on the life of the city, it is of the highest importance.

London, indeed, confronts us on the very first page—the London of the hero's grandfather, Godfrey Nickleby, who was saved from throwing himself off the Monument by a timely bequest from an uncle, Ralph Nickleby. On his death he bequeathed three thousand pounds to his son Ralph (named after the benefactor), and a farm "about the size of Russell Square" to his other son, Nicholas. Ralph, who had been placed in a mercantile house in the city, applied himself to making money, an endeavour largely

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aided by the legacy he received at his father's death ; Nicholas married and produced Nicholas the second, hero of the tale, and his sister Kate, and having speculated, and generally muddled up what property he possessed, died, leaving his widow and children practically penniless.

We are first introduced to London in Golden Square, where Ralph Nickleby had his dwelling and office. Dickens's description of the neighbourhood is famous :

“Although a few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in anybody's way to or from anywhere. It is one of the squares that have been ; a quarter of the town that has gone down in the world, and taken to letting lodgings. Many of its first and second floors are let, furnished, to single gentlemen ; and it takes boarders besides. It is a great resort of foreigners. The dark-complexioned men who wear large rings, and heavy watch-guards, and bushy whiskers, and who congregate under the Opera Colonnade, and about the box-office in the season, between four and five in the afternoon, when they give away the orders,—all live in Golden Square, or within a street of it. Two or three violins and a wind instrument from the Opera band reside within its precincts. Its boarding-houses are musical, and the notes of pianos and harps float in the evening time round the head of the mournful statue, the guardian genius of a little wilderness of shrubs, in the centre of the square. On a summer's night, windows are thrown open, and groups of swarthy mustachioed men are seen by the passer-by, lounging at the casements, and smoking fearfully. Sounds of gruff voices practising vocal music invade the evening's silence ; and the fumes of choice tobacco scent the air. There, snuff and cigars, and German pipes and flutes, and violins and violoncellos, divide the supremacy between them. It is the region of song and smoke. Street bands are on their mettle in Golden Square ; and itinerant glee-singers quaver involuntarily as they raise their voices within its boundaries.”

The actual house which Ralph Nickleby inhabited was,

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it has been surmised, No. 6, on the east side, then called James Street. William Windham had been born in this house, and at No. 7, next door, William A' Beckett, a friend of Dickens, lived. Perhaps for the latter reason No. 7, now demolished, has also been pointed out as Ralph's abode. However, I am in favour of the house on the south side, of which an illustration is here given, and of which there is a later view in Rimmer's *About England with Dickens*. It has, of course, been rebuilt.<sup>1</sup> Dickens himself shows us its owner sitting in one of the back rooms and gazing into space :

“Mr Nickleby closed an account-book which lay on his desk, and, throwing himself back in his chair, gazed with an air of abstraction through the dirty window. Some London houses have a melancholy little plot of ground behind them, usually fenced in by four high whitewashed walls, and frowned upon by stacks of chimneys : in which there withers on, from year to year, a crippled tree, that makes a show of putting forth a few leaves late in autumn when other trees shed theirs, and, drooping in the effort, lingers on, all crackled and smoke-dried, till the following season, when it repeats the same process, and perhaps if the weather be particularly genial, even tempts some rheumatic sparrow to chirrup in its branches. People sometimes call these dark yards ‘gardens’ ; it is not supposed that they were ever planted, but rather that they are pieces of unreclaimed land, with the withered vegetation of the original brick-field. No man thinks of walking in this desolate place, or of turning it to any account. A few hampers, half-a-dozen broken bottles, and such-like rubbish, may be thrown there, when the tenant first moves in, but nothing more ; and there they remain until he goes away again : the damp straw taking just as long to moulder as it thinks proper : and mingling with the scanty box, and stunted everbrowns, and broken flower-pots, that are scattered mournfully about—a prey to ‘blacks’ and dirt.”

<sup>1</sup> No. 35, where Cardinal Wiseman lived, has also been suggested as the house Dickens had in mind.



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Later we accompany Ralph to the Public Meeting at the London Tavern, 123 Bishopsgate Street Within, in whose large room such assemblies were wont to forgather. This once famous place was finally closed in 1876, the premises of the Royal Bank of Scotland being erected on its site. The meeting in question was, no doubt, typical of such gatherings, where all sorts of odd people turned up, including the gentleman who had been up all night at Crockford's, the notorious gambling club in St James's Street, of which the Devonshire, so far as the position is concerned, is the successor.

From such exciting scenes to the quiet abode of Miss La Creevy, in the Strand, is rather a sudden transition. It was there that Mrs Nickleby and her son and daughter lodged, on their arrival in London; and there that Ralph came to interview them, having learnt of their presence from Newman Noggs, who "suddenly stood before him," as he stepped into a doorway hard by St Paul's, to set his watch, on his way westward from the London Tavern. Miss La Creevy's abode was about half-way down the Strand, and from its windows she could see the people going to meetings (very different from those at the London Tavern) at Exeter Hall—the Exeter Hall that was not long since transformed into one of Messrs Lyons's establishments.

We all know that one of the results of the interview between Ralph and his relations was the engagement of Nicholas as usher in Mr Squeers' school—Dotheboys Hall.

Mr Squeers was, as we know, found at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill, and Dickens gives us one of his vivid descriptions of that part of London which has now become so altered. A few extracts will suffice to convey the atmosphere of the place in those days :

"Snow Hill—Snow Hill too, coupled with a Saracen's Head : picturing to us by a double association of ideas, something stern and rugged ! A bleak desolate tract of country, open to piercing blasts and fierce wintry storms—a dark, cold, gloomy heath, lonely by day, and scarcely to be thought of by honest folks at night—a place which solitary

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wayfarers shun, and where desperate robbers congregate ;—this, or something like this, should be the prevalent notion of Snow Hill, in those remote and rustic parts, through which the Saracen's Head, like some grim apparition, rushes each day and night with mysterious and ghost-like punctuality ; holding its swift and headlong course in all weathers, and seeming to bid defiance to the very elements themselves.

“The reality is rather different, but by no means to be despised notwithstanding. There, at the very core of London, in the heart of its business and animation, in the midst of a whirl of noise and motion : stemming as it were the giant currents of life that flow ceaselessly on from different quarters, and meet beneath its walls : stands Newgate ; and in that crowded street on which it frowns so darkly—within a few feet of the squalid tottering houses—upon the very spot on which the venders of soup and fish and damaged fruit are now plying their trades—scores of human beings, amidst a roar of sounds to which even the tumult of a great city is as nothing, four, six, or eight strong men at a time, have been hurried violently and swiftly from the world. . . .

“Near to the jail, and by consequence near to Smithfield also, and the Compter, and the bustle and noise of the city ; and just on that particular part of Snow Hill where omnibus horses going eastward seriously think of falling down on purpose, and where horses in hackney cabriolets going westward not unfrequently fall by accident, is the coach-yard of the Saracen's Head Inn ; its portal guarded by two Saracens' heads and shoulders. . . .

“When you walk up this yard, you will see the booking-office on your left, and the tower of St Sepulchre's church, darting abruptly up into the sky, on your right, and a gallery of bedrooms on both sides. Just before you, you will observe a long window with the words ‘coffee-room’ legibly painted above it ; and looking out of that window, you would have seen in addition, if you had gone at the right time, Mr Wackford Squeers with his hands in his pockets.”

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The Saracen's Head<sup>1</sup> was a once well-known coaching tavern, on the north side of Snow Hill, which the construction of Holborn Viaduct blotted out of existence. On the new Snow Hill another tavern of the same name feebly perpetuated the fame of the original. Besides the two heads of Saracens, which, Dickens says, frowned upon you from each side of the gateway, there was another similar sign on the front of the inn itself, at the top of the yard. These objects were a continual joy to the gay youth of an earlier period, who delighted in pulling them down at night, just as they wrenched off door-knockers and upset Charlies in their boxes. In those days there were still numbers of old and picturesque buildings about this spot, which modern improvements have wiped out of existence, and of these the Saracen's Head was probably the most suggestive and outwardly attractive.

Phiz's illustration, no doubt taken on the spot, sufficiently indicates what the interior of the room looked like when Nicholas was made over in bondage to the egregious school-master; although the table, such as was usually seen in coffee-rooms, flanked by two others "of extraordinary shapes and dimensions made to suit the angles of the partitions," are not visible. But there are the "boxes"; there is the redoubtable Squeers, mending his pen; with Belling, the Taunton boy, shivering on his exiguous luggage; and there is Snawley, dragging in his trembling charges; and the clock—which is thirty-five minutes behind time.

The next morning the coach bore Nicholas, in company with Squeers and the wretched pupils he had collected, into the wilds of Yorkshire, where for a time we must leave him; merely reminding the reader that the letter Newman Noggs had handed to him on leaving, informed him that the writer lodged at the Crown, in Silver Street, Golden Square. This inn was at the corner of Silver Street and James Street (the

<sup>1</sup> There was another Saracen's Head, in Aldgate, also a famous coaching inn.

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former is now Beak Street) and a bar door led into each thoroughfare.

In the meanwhile Ralph "provides" for his niece, Kate, by arranging for her to go to Madame Mantalini's dress-making establishment. No. 11 Wigmore Street has been pointed out as the actual house; but all Dickens tells us, so far as its situation is concerned, is that it was near Cavendish Square. In those days the ground floor of No. 11 was occupied by one Christian who had his "linen and outfitting warehouse" here, Madame Mantalini's showrooms being on the first floor.<sup>1</sup>

The house in which Ralph installed Mrs Nickleby was in a very different position, being a large dingy abode in Thames Street, abutting on a wharf, and in so dirty and forlorn a condition that it had apparently been uninhabited for years. To this depressing locality Newman Noggs conducts Mrs Nickleby and Kate. Here they were installed in a couple of rooms on the first floor, sparsely furnished and dreary to the utmost degree. It is impossible to identify the actual house (it was Spigwiffin's wharf to which it was adjacent), but it was probably between London Bridge and the Custom House, where so many of these old wharves still exist.

Although Newman Noggs gave his address at the Crown in Silver Street, where he said he lodged, he probably changed his abode soon after Nicholas left London, for on that young man's return we find him inhabiting rooms in "a by-gone, faded, tumble-down street" in the neighbourhood of Golden Square. Dickens gives us a very minute description of this street, but does not mention its name, although it is not improbable that it was Silver Street itself. It is sufficient to say that Mr Crawl and the Kenwigs family were fellow-lodgers, and that almost any of the lesser thoroughfares around Golden Square might have been models for that in which they dwelt.

It is in the Kenwigs's rooms that Nicholas first meets Mr

<sup>1</sup> See Tallis's Views. The house was four doors from Wimpole Street, on the north side.



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Lillyvick, and Miss Petowker “of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,”<sup>1</sup> with whom he is destined again to come in contact during his theatrical experiences.

Nicholas’s attempts at finding employment bring him to a great public thoroughfare, where his eye catches the announcement of a “General Agency Office.” He there hears of Mr Gregsbury, M.P., who resides in Manchester Buildings, Westminster, and who requires a secretary. The buildings were situated roughly where Westminster Bridge Station is to-day, and Tallis shows them as they appeared in 1838. Thurtell, who murdered Weare, once had a gambling hell in this block, which took its name from the fact that the Earls of Manchester once possessed a town residence on the site. Dickens thus describes the place :

“Within the precincts of the ancient city of Westminster, and within half a quarter of a mile of its ancient sanctuary, is a narrow and dirty region, the sanctuary of the smaller members of Parliament in modern days. It is all comprised in one street of gloomy lodging-houses, from whose windows, in vacation-time, there frown long melancholy rows of bills, which say, as plainly as did the countenances of their occupiers, ranged on ministerial and opposition benches in the session which slumbers with its fathers, ‘To Let,’ ‘To Let.’ In busier periods of the year these bills disappear, and the houses swarm with legislators. There are legislators in the parlours, in the first floor, in the second, in the third, in the garrets ; the small apartments reek with the breath of deputations and delegates. In damp weather, the place is rendered close by the steams of moist acts of Parliament and frowzy petitions ; general postmen grow faint as they enter its infected limits, and shabby figures in quest of franks, flit restlessly to and fro like the troubled ghosts of Complete Letter-writers departed. This is Manchester Buildings.”

About the same time, Kate having aroused the ire of

<sup>1</sup> This was the fourth Drury Lane, opened in 1812, whose colonnade (still existing) was then comparatively new, having been added in 1831.

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Miss Knag, at Madame Mantalini's, also looks out for a new situation; and finds one at Mrs Witterly's, in Cadogan Place, after the terrible experience of meeting Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederick Verisopht at her uncle's house.

Dickens's description of Cadogan Place sounds very out-of-date to-day, but was probably essentially accurate eighty-odd years ago :

“ Cadogan Place,” he says, “ is the one slight bond that joins two great extremes ; it is the connecting link between the aristocratic pavements of Belgrave Square, and the barbarism of Chelsea. It is in Sloane Street, but not of it. The people in Cadogan Place look down upon Sloane Street, and think Brompton low. They affect fashion too, and wonder where the New Road is. Not that they claim to be on precisely the same footing as the high folks of Belgrave Square and Grosvenor Place, but that they stand, with reference to them, rather in the light of those illegitimate children of the great who are content to boast of their connections, although their connections disavow them. Wearing as much as they can of the airs and semblances of loftiest rank, the people of Cadogan Place have the realities of middle station. It is the conductor which communicates to the inhabitants of regions beyond its limit, the shock of pride of birth and rank, which it has not within itself, but derives from a fountain-head beyond ; or, like the ligament which unites the Siamese twins, it contains something of the life and essence of two distinct bodies, and yet belongs to neither.”

In those days nursery gardens bounded the west side of Sloane Street, opposite Cadogan Place, and the house known as the Pavilion was in existence, before Prince's Club was formed there ; before Pont Street was thought of ; the period when Belgrave Square was in its youth, and there was an air of rurality now only preserved by the long gardens screening the houses of Cadogan Place from the busy traffic in Sloane Street. Anyone comparing a contemporary map of this locality with one of to-day, cannot fail to realise that

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hardly in any part of London has a greater change come over the scene.

Nicholas, on his way to Portsmouth, falling in with the inimitable Vincent Crummles and his troupe<sup>1</sup>; and his varied experiences in their company, take us away from London for a time. We have, however, glimpses of Lord Frederick Verisopht in his rooms in Regent Street, and of the same young fool calling with Sir Mulberry Hawk on Mrs Wititterly in order really to see Kate Nickleby.<sup>2</sup>

On Nicholas's hurried return to London, finding his mother away from her home in Thames Street, he wanders, a prey to many disquieting thoughts, westward, and entering "a handsome hotel in one of the thoroughfares which lie between Park Lane and Bond Street"—no doubt Mivart's, the precursor of Claridge's—he overhears Mulberry Hawk's remarks about his sister, and vainly seeks to find out his identity. On his return to Newman Noggs's lodgings he learns, however, the whole truth.

Rushing off to Cadogan Gardens, and bringing Kate away with him, he sets off for Thames Street; and they again get settled in Miss La Creevy's rooms in the Strand. On once more trying his luck at the Registry Office, Nicholas meets Mr Cheeryble, who, hearing his story, carries him away to his office in the City. They went by omnibus from Oxford Street, and "when they reached the Bank Nicholas was hurried along Threadneedle Street, and through some lanes and passages on the right, until they emerged in a quiet shady little square." Tim Linkinwater averred that there "wasn't such a square in the world" as the square in which he had kept the Cheeryble books for forty-four years. But, says

<sup>1</sup> By the way Mr Snevellicci, it will be remembered, lived in Broad Court, Bow Street, once a great resort of actors, who frequented the Wrekin tavern, in it.

<sup>2</sup> The Kensington Gravel Pits mentioned in Chapter XXVIII. derived its name from the gravel pits lying between it and the town of Kensington (Faulkner). It was a very healthy neighbourhood, and the thoroughfare running through it is now approximately represented by Latimer Road.



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Dickens, "let not those whose eyes have been accustomed to the aristocratic gravity of Grosvenor Square and Hanover Square, the dowager barrenness and frigidity of Fitzroy Square, or the gravel walks and garden seats of the squares of Russell and Euston, suppose that the affections of Tim Linkinwater had been awakened and kept alive by any refreshing associations with leaves, however dingy, or grass, however bare and thin. The City square has no enclosure, save a lamp-post in the middle, and no grass but the weeds which spring up round its base. It is a quiet, little-frequented retired spot."

Now, although Dickens refrains from more particularly indicating the identity of the place, I believe we shall be pretty correct in assuming it to be Billiter Square, whose situation answers to the description of the route taken by Cheeryble and Nicholas. An alternative might be found in Lime Street Square<sup>1</sup> (shown by Horwood, but no longer in existence); but I prefer Billiter Square, where Voltaire once stayed with Mr Cavalier, and Nathan Basevi, the maternal grandfather of Lord Beaconsfield, lived. The West India House had its offices here in 1828, in the building which preceded its more imposing premises. While things were going well with Nicholas in his new employment in the Cheerybles' office, poor SMIKE, it will be remembered, returning to Bow (where Mrs Nickleby now lived) from escorting Miss La Creevy to her lodgings in the Strand, loiters at the foot of Ludgate Hill, and turning out of his road to look at Newgate, is pounced upon by Squeers, who carries him off to Snawley's house "on the extreme borders of some new settlements adjoining Somers Town," where he was lodging—Somers Town, then innocent of the great railway which to-day has its terminus there and its lines running through the district.

On the very day of this mishap, a mail coach from the north traversed the streets of Islington and "clattered onward to its halting-place hard by the Post Office," bearing

<sup>1</sup> Both these squares are squares no longer, and in their rebuilt form give us little help in our investigations.



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honest John Browdie and his bride to London. "There be Paul's Church. 'Ecod, he be a soizable 'un, he be," exclaims that worthy, pointing out the sights with the enthusiasm of a countryman, "I'd loike to see where the Lord Mayor o' Lunnun lives,"<sup>1</sup> he adds, after speaking quite disrespectfully of the Post Office—ignorant as yet of penny postage (which came two years later—1840), and a relatively small affair in those days. Browdie's knowledge of the metropolis was of the vaguest, but he knows of the Saracen's Head (Sarah's Head he calls it), and thither he and his wife and Miss Squeers, who accompanies them, are driven. How he meets Squeers and is taken to Snawley's lodgings, and there, under guise of illness, effects Smike's escape, is known to every reader of the book.

The tale at this point takes us into various localities: Nicholas going to see Miss Cecilia Bobster, for instance, in a street of gloomy appearance and very little frequented, near the Edgware Road; which Newman Noggs calls "good," and Nicholas, "rather dull," but one, in view of the many streets even then running from the main thoroughfares, impossible to identify. Much, too, happens at the Saracen's Head, and in the cottage at Bow, where the eccentric gentleman next door exhibits his admiration for Mrs Nickleby in a curiously horticultural manner. Then we meet with Ralph Nickleby making a lot of "odd calls," terminating at Pimlico, and walking along St James's Park (where he meets Brooker) on his way to Madame Mantalini's, at which abode he comes on a domestic scene of more than usual poignancy. Anon we find Nicholas going, on the Cheerybles' behalf, to see the young lady (Madeline Bray) whose visit to the office in Billiter Square had before so impressed itself on him. The place to which he was directed was "a row of mean and not over-cleanly houses, situated within 'the rules' of the King's Bench Prison, and not many hundred paces distant from the

<sup>1</sup> If he succeeded he saw the Mansion House still crowned by that upper storey—called "The Mare's Nest"—which was not removed till 1842.

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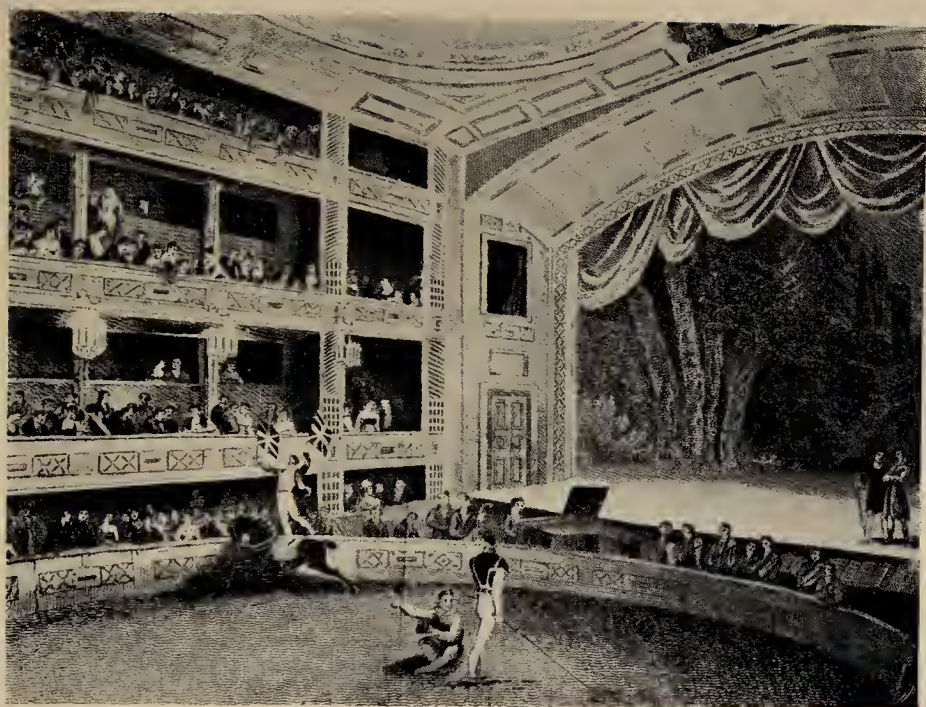
Obelisk in St George's Fields." I may mention that this is the first mention made in Dickens's writings of the place he, as a boy, knew so well. "The rules," Dickens tells us, "were a certain liberty adjoining the prison, and comprising some dozen streets in which debtors who could raise money to pay large fees, from which their creditors did *not* derive any benefit, were permitted to reside."

The position of the King's Bench Prison was at the end of Blackman Street, at a spot called Stone's End, and occupied the space between the Borough Road, Southwark Bridge Road and Great Suffolk Street. Tallis, in his view of Blackman Street, shows the spike-surmounted wall surrounding the buildings, and notes that those who can purchase the liberties "have the benefit of walking through Blackman Street, a part of the Borough, and in St George's Fields." These advantages could be obtained by a payment, in the case of small debts, of five guineas; eight guineas for the first hundred pounds of debt; and about half that sum extra for every subsequent hundred. The rules had originally covered a three-mile radius, but were circumscribed after 1798. The actual home of the Brays (perhaps it was in Rodney Street or William Street) was in a row of houses each of which had a small garden in front, and Nicholas reached it "after traversing a very dirty and dusty suburb (the Borough), of which minor theatricals, shell-fish, ginger-beer, spring vans, greengrocery, and brokers' shops, appeared to compose the main and most prominent features." It is at one of the minor theatres that Nicholas, on his way home, sees the announcement of Vincent Crummles's positively last appearance, it will be remembered.

As the story draws to its close, and to tell the truth it takes a long and devious way to get there, we come across Squeers in his lodging, "an upper room of a mean house, situated in an obscure street or rather court near Lambeth," hanging about in attendance on Ralph Nickleby and his disreputable schemes; we "assist," in the French sense of the term, at Brooker's very long account of Ralph and his

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evil doings; we are present at that scene where the Mantalini, in a cellar among "that labyrinth of streets which lies between Seven Dials and Soho," are found by Nicholas and Kate wrangling as usual, and Mr Mantalini, fallen from his high estate, is reduced to the ignominious occupation of turning a "demnition" mangle.



ASTLEY'S AMPHITHEATRE  
FROM A PRINT BY GEORGE JONES





## VII

### THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP (1840)

It is a rather singular thing that the one book of Dickens's which has for its title the name of a London building—for the Old Curiosity Shop was undoubtedly an actual structure, although the author may have played some tricks with its appearance and situation—should be the one book into which there enters less material for London topographical annotation, than almost any other of the writer's works. But so it is. At first sight one might think that with Quilp's residence on Tower Hill and Sampson Brass's in Bevis Marks, with the Garlands at Finchley and Mr Dick Swiveller's apartments in Drury Lane, there would be no lack of material in this respect, especially when the situation of the Old Curiosity Shop itself, although that situation is proved on examination to be illusive in the extreme, is considered. It must, however, be remembered that from Chapter XII. onwards—practically to the end of the novel, which extends to no fewer than seventy-three chapters—the story is very largely, if not chiefly, occupied in detailing the incidents connected with the wanderings, outside London, of Little Nell and her grandfather. Then, too, the London localities that *are* mentioned are relatively few, and we are continually brought back, by the action of the narrative, to the same spots; the result being that of all the long novels, this is the least productive in those actual presentments of London landmarks or those vivid descriptions capable of recalling the appearance of the London of the period, which Dickens gives us in such profusion in many of his other books.

But although this is so, we are, at the very beginning of the tale, confronted with a problem which has puzzled many

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readers, and has exercised the ingenious guesswork of many investigators—I mean the actual locality in which the Curiosity Shop itself existed. That its material counterpart did exist there is not the least shadow of a doubt. It is sufficient to know Dickens's methods to realise that, however much he may have idealised it, the building of which the shop formed a part really once stood somewhere in London. I say "once stood," for Dickens expressly tells us, at the close of the story, that Kit would sometimes, in recalling the history of Little Nell, take his children to the street where she had lived, although "new improvements had altered it so much, it was not like the same"; and he adds: "The old house had been long ago pulled down, and a fine broad street was in its place. At first he would draw with his stick a square upon the ground, to show where it used to stand; but he soon became uncertain of the spot, and could only say it was thereabouts, he thought, and that these alterations were confusing."

One may, therefore, at once put out of court the claim made for the little quaint old shop in Portsmouth Street, just off Lincoln's Inn Fields, to be the original building. And not only because of the emphatic statement that the structure no longer exists, but because its very appearance is alien from that described by Dickens himself in Chapter XI., where he speaks of Kit making his way to the old spot and finding the house empty and forlorn: "The windows broken, the rusty sashes rattling in their frames, the deserted house<sup>1</sup> *a dull barrier dividing the glaring lights and bustle of the street into two long lines, and standing in the midst, cold, dark, and empty, presented a cheerless spectacle.*" No one, knowing the outlines of the old-world diminutive building in a small by-way, to which a claim has been attached, will for an instant hesitate to say that that claim is unfounded and, on the face of it, untenable. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary for me to insist on this point, as students of Dickens's topography have never taken seriously this attempt

<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

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to identify, with one of his most famous *locales*, what is in itself sufficiently picturesque to appeal to us on other grounds. But those who have not studied the matter should be informed ; and, after all, we have sufficient Dickens buildings left (although their number is decreasing) to enable us to dispense with anything hypothetical, or even merely legendary, in this connection.

But although it is possible to say what was *not* the place where the Old Curiosity Shop stood, it is not so easy to indicate where it was. The reader will remember that at the beginning of the book an old man, wandering about one night, is accosted by a small girl (Little Nell), who, having lost her way, asks his help. "I had roamed into the city," he says. Not necessarily that portion which we call the city, but into London generally. When he inquires where the child lives, she tells him that "it is a very long way from here." Later on we are told that while the old man is pacing up and down before the house, "a few stragglers from the theatres hurried by." This might help to limit our area to-day, but would not be so easy in those times, when the theatres were relatively few, and not massed together as they are now.

From all we can gather from the text, in the way of description, it seems almost hopeless work trying to identify the place. But Dickens, as I have said, tells us that subsequently "a fine broad road was in its place." Now he was writing this book in 1840, it was finished in January 1841, and therefore one might be guided approximately to the spot by a knowledge of some thoroughfare which had then been recently formed. But at this period there was a vast deal of reconstruction going on in London, and such a clue, if discovered, would hardly be conclusive. Two spots have been suggested as possible sites : one of these is No. 10 Green Street, at the south-east corner of Leicester Square. This site is certainly contiguous to the "fine broad road" mentioned by Dickens, but this street cannot be said to be "in its place." Nor did the Charing Cross Road (the street



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referred to) come into existence till 1887; so that unless Dickens was daringly anticipative, that could not have been the thoroughfare indicated.

Another suggested "shop" was No. 24 Fetter Lane, nearly opposite the Record Office, which was, in 1891, a kind of old curiosity shop, and had been a haunt of Dickens in his younger days, its aged proprietress, Mrs Haines, remembering him well. All this is interesting enough, but it is not by any means conclusive; and one must, perforce, fall back on the theory that Dickens took the features of one shop (and certainly those of 24 Fetter Lane<sup>1</sup> may be made to fit in with his description), and placed it in some other locality.

Having thus glanced at what is, I fear, the insoluble mystery surrounding the identity of the Old Curiosity Shop, in which the story opens, one may take a peep into its interior as depicted by the author:

"The place . . . was one of those receptacles for old and curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of this town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there; fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters; rusty weapons of various kinds; distorted figures in china, and wood, and iron, and ivory; tapestry, and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches, and tombs, and deserted houses, and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but was in keeping with himself—nothing that looked older or more worn than he."

Reading this description one is inevitably reminded of two other old curiosity shops and their owners, famous in literature: one, that depicted by Balzac in *Le Peau de*

<sup>1</sup> There was a description of it in *The Globe*, January 1891; the house was said to have been that of Dryden, although No. 16 was marked by a tablet commemorating the poet.

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*Chagrin*; the other, the gruesome, dubious place described by Stevenson in *Markheim*.

The graphic pencil of Cattermole has further contributed to our knowledge of the sort of interior Dickens here indicates, and one pictures the old dealer wandering about its dark and dusty precincts, and his little grandchild flitting like a lurking sunbeam amid its ghostly nooks and corners.

*The Old Curiosity Shop* is not a book in which, for our present purpose, it is necessary to follow closely the plot—if it can be said to possess one—or the doings of its characters, which are, to tell the truth, of a rather wayward nature. All that is, I think, required is to track down these characters to the London localities with which they are connected or to which circumstances may have directed their steps. In doing this the first we come to, after having made the acquaintance of Little Nell and her grandfather, is that monstrous creation—Quilp. I cannot believe in Quilp. He seems to me a kind of materialised nightmare; a being evolved, not like Shallow, “of a cheese-paring, after supper,” but rather of the exceedingly indigestible results of a too heavy supper. To me he is Dickens’s most unsuccessful character—not so much a caricature as a devil’s caricature of a caricature; a Caliban in terms of Houndsditch; an abortion produced from the scum and mud of Limehouse—such a being as, with the habits and sentiments he possesses, would, long before the story begins, have in real life committed all the crimes in the calendar, and would only not have been hanged because no sane jury could have possibly brought him in responsible for his actions. In Quilp Dickens produced the impossible. But he was to go further and create something still more impossible—namely, the fact that such a creature could, by any chance, have got a woman to marry him. We all know the story of that ugly, witty fellow, Wilkes, and his boast that he could win any pretty woman from the handsomest man in the world—by his tongue. But no one will venture to say that Quilp’s manners or conversational powers were a whit more attractive than his personal

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appearance. Caliban is a monster, but he possesses that kind of dynamic force which somehow seems to make of him a piece of original nature—an offshoot of a world of unshaped possibilities ; and then Shakespeare never meant us to suppose that we might walk about *his* London and meet with the creature in the form of flesh and blood. But Quilp was not only a living entity ; he actually resided on Tower Hill. You may see some strange sights on Tower Hill now, and you might have done in Dickens's day, but I will undertake to say you might hunt in its purlieus long enough before such a thing as Quilp would be exposed to your wondering gaze.

I have been, I fear, led into a digression, but one likes to say one's say occasionally on something not quite germane to the subject in hand.

Well, Quilp lived on Tower Hill. Whereabouts is a question. His residence looked on the Tower, we know, but from which point of the compass is not stated. At least two places have, however, been suggested as the originals of his dwelling : one of these was No. 2 Tower Hill, since demolished ; the other, No. 6 Tower Dock, facing the entrance to the Tower, and in 1886 in the occupation of a Mr Priestley, carman.

In addition to Quilp's domestic dwelling on Tower Hill, that egregious person had a sort of office or derelict yard opposite his private house, on the Surrey side of the river, known as "Quilp's Wharf." He was a ship-breaker on a small scale, but how he came to possess the amount of property he is credited with is somewhat of a mystery. "To judge from appearances he must," says Dickens, "have been a ship-breaker on a very small scale, or have broken his ships up very small indeed. Neither did the place present any extraordinary aspect of life or activity, as its only human occupant was an amphibious boy in a canvas suit, whose sole change of occupation was from sitting on the head of a pile and throwing stones into the mud when the tide was out, to standing with his hands in his pockets gazing listlessly on the motion and on the bustle of the river at high water."



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Quilp's yard has been, like most of the Dickens localities, altogether changed in appearance from the "small, rat-infested, dreary yard, in which were a little wooden counting-house, burrowing all awry in the dust . . . a few fragments of rusty anchors, several large iron rings, some piles of rotten wood, and two or three heaps of old sheet copper." It became later known as Butler's Wharf; but even as late as the eighties Quilp's prototype is said, by Mr Allbut, to have been remembered by the older residents in this strange neighbourhood.

Besides being a ship-breaker Quilp followed a variety of other, yet hardly to be termed highly lucrative, employments. "He collected the rents of whole colonies of filthy streets and alleys by the water-side, advanced money to seamen and petty officers of merchant vessels, had a share in the ventures of divers mates of East Indiamen, smoked his smuggled cigars under the very nose of the Custom House, and made appointments on 'Change with men in glazed hats and round jackets pretty well every day."

In Chapter VII. we are introduced to Mr Richard Swiveller, who occupied what were euphemistically termed "apartments"—in reality a single chamber—over a tobacconist's shop in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane. Among other facts connected with this mercurial young gentleman we learn that by dint of overmuch outstanding credit he is obliged to enter in a little book the names of the streets "he can't go down." "This dinner to-day," he remarks to Fred Trent, "closes Long Acre. I bought a pair of boots in Great Queen Street last week and made that no thoroughfare too. There's only one avenue to the Strand left open now, and I shall have to stop up that to-night with a pair of gloves. The roads are closing so fast in every direction that in about a month's time, unless my aunt sends me a remittance, I shall have to go three or four miles out of town to get over the way."

Connected, although not so closely as he would have wished, with Swiveller, is a certain Miss Sophia Wackles, who resided with her mother and two sisters at Chelsea, where



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the trio conducted "a very small day-school for young ladies of proportionate dimensions."

Again our indications of an actual spot are so vague as practically to be valueless. Chelsea is a large area, and the school may have been anywhere between Sloane Square and the World's End. I like to imagine it in the Grove, off the King's Road, that curious little backwater which, it seems only the other day, was uprooted and overbuilt by the charming modern Queen Anne houses of Mulberry Walk.

It was not for nothing that Dickens makes Swiveller's hated rival a market-gardener (called Cheggs; Phœbus—what a name!), for at that time adjacent Brompton and much of Chelsea itself was covered by market-gardens, which extended over the whole area almost from the King's Road to Knightsbridge and High Street, Kensington.

From the then rural peace of Chelsea to the turmoil of Bevis Marks, where Sampson Brass, "an attorney of no very good repute," had his office, is a change indeed. Bevis Marks (a corruption of Buries Marks, or Bury's limits) was originally the boundary of the property owned by the abbots of Bury St Edmunds. Dickens speaks of coming here "to find a house for Brass," but, unfortunately, does not tell us which one he chose, although No. 10 has been identified as the place selected.

The reader will remember that when Quilp and Brass installed themselves in the Curiosity Shop, the former having obtained a legal right to the property owing to the monomania of the real owner, Nell and her grandfather determined to fly from London.

At the close of Chapter XII. their wanderings begin: "Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither." They appear to have gone by way of the Tottenham Cross Road and the adjacent streets, "until these streets became more straggling yet, dwindled and dwindled away until they were only small garden patches bordering the road." Then

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they passed a turnpike ; then came trees and haystacks and open fields. Here for a time they rested, " looking back at old St Paul's looming through the smoke." The late Dr Garnett identified the spot where Little Nell and her grandfather halted, and Mr Van Noorden, in an extremely interesting article in *The Strand Magazine* for October 1911, pointed out the resemblance between the tree shown in an illustration to an early edition of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, with the wanderers sitting beneath it, and the tree on Parliament Hill, which Dr Garnett identified as Little Nell's temporary resting-place.

Never more, however, were they destined to return to the city where happiness and misery had alternately dogged them. It thus happens that the main interest of the book is unconnected with London, and it is therefore here unnecessary to follow that sad and long pilgrimage. Their falling in with the mountebanks and their presence in the motley crowd on the race-course ; their meeting with the schoolmaster (destined to play Providence again and more amply to them both later on) ; Mrs Jarley<sup>1</sup> and her waxworks, and little Nell's active association with that amusing old lady ; the travels of the old man and young child through the manufacturing districts on their way to the country they yearned for ; Codlin and Short, Isaac List and Jowl and Mr James Groves, and other less prominent characters with whom they came in touch ; the old man's gambling and the young girl's terror of its results ; finally the haven of refuge they reach under the schoolmaster's ægis ; little Nell's death just before the Stranger and Mr Garland and Abel can reach them to tell them of prospective happiness, and the old man's end soon after ; all these incidents are known to the reader of the book, but for us here possess only the interest which anything Dickens wrote must always evoke ; but not interest

<sup>1</sup> Mr Van Noorden has identified an old house, since demolished, in High Holborn, near Museum Street, and facing the end of Drury Lane, as having been the original of Mrs Jarley's waxworks exhibitions. It was known as Ferguson's Waxwork, and had been founded about 1832.

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of a topographical nature, at least of a London topographical nature.

The doings of other characters, however, still provide something in this way, although to tell the truth, not very much. The references are chiefly of an incidental character. Thus we know that old Maunders (as Mr Vuffin remembers) had eight male and female dwarfs sitting down every day to dinner at his cottage in Spa Fields, that area so-called from the London Spa, a mineral spring of some note during the seventeenth and earlier part of the eighteenth century, where the Ducking Pond House once stood, and later the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel.

Then there is the little summer-house overlooking the river where Quilp suggests to Dick Swiveller that they might take a glass and smoke a pipe. Dickens himself has provided us with a vignette of this summer-house and the tavern of which it formed a part :

“The summer-house of which Mr Quilp had spoken was a rugged wooden box, rotten and bare to see, which overhung the river's mud, and threatened to slide down into it. The tavern to which it belonged was a crazy building, sapped and undermined by the rats, and only upheld by great bars of wood which were reared against its walls, and had propped it up so long that even they were decaying and yielding with their load, and of a windy night might be heard to creak and crack as if the whole fabric were about to come toppling down. The house stood—if anything so old and feeble could be said to stand—on a piece of waste ground, blighted with the unwholesome smoke of factory chimneys, and echoing the clank of iron wheels and rush of troubled water. Its internal accommodation amply fulfilled the promise of the outside. The rooms were low and damp, the clammy walls were pierced with chinks and holes, the rotten floors had sunk from their level, the very beams started from their places and warned the timid stranger from their neighbourhood.”

In those days there were various places of resort of this

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character for the inhabitants of that part of the Thames, round about the Pool and Limehouse. The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters of *Our Mutual Friend* indeed might well serve for the place where Quilp and Dick Swiveller forgathered.

Finchley, where the Garlands lived, was then quite out of London, and Kit, on taking service with the family, tells his mother that he will often be able to look in to see her when he “comes *into* town.” Indeed Finchley was, even in those days, an outlying village hardly yet dreaming of becoming, as it has, an integral part of the city.

Where Kit’s home was is not indicated. That it could not have been very far from the Old Curiosity Shop is shown by internal evidence, and therefore, if the latter really was in Green Street, Leicester Square, or in Fetter Lane, may well have been somewhere in the wilds of Covent Garden or the Seven Dials.

Fred Trent, we are told, lodged “in the roof of a house in an old ghostly inn.” Now this was probably one of the Inns of Court—Thavies’, or Lyons’, or Clifford’s—rooms in which were let out as lodgings to others than those specially associated with the law.

In Chapter XXXIII. we are given some particulars of Brass’s house and office at Bevis Marks, which bore upon the door a plate inscribed “Brass, Solicitor.” “In the parlour window of this little habitation, which is so close upon the footway that the passenger who takes the wall brushes the dim glass with his coat sleeve—much to its improvement, for it is very dirty—in this parlour window there hung a curtain of faded green, so threadbare from long service as by no means to intercept the view of the little dark room. . . . There was not much to look at.” Here Quilp, Brass’s chief client, introduces Dick Swiveller as a clerk, it will be remembered, into an atmosphere which he describes as “delicious,” but which Dickens speaks of as being “impregnated with strong whiffs of the second-hand wearing apparel exposed for sale in Duke’s Place and Houndsditch”—*i.e.* the Clothes’ Exchange in the passage off the latter thoroughfare, and in the neighbouring



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Cutler Street, Harrow Street and Petticoat Lane (Middlesex Street).

To this unlikely spot comes the single gentleman (really, as the sequel shows, old Trent's the curiosity-dealer's brother) and takes the lodgings on the first-floor front. By the way, the Golden Axe tavern, eulogised by Dick Swiveller, was at the corner of Bevis Marks and St Mary Axe ; while I may here suggest that Mr Witherden's office was probably in Lincoln's Inn or Gray's Inn ; although it is only by reading between the lines that one has any, the slightest, clue to its whereabouts.

In Chapter XXXIX. Kit takes his mother and Barbara's mother and, of course, Barbara herself to Astley's.

"Dear, dear, what a place it looked that Astley's, with all the paint, gilding, and looking-glass ; the vague smell of horses, suggestive of coming wonders ; the curtain that hid such gorgeous mysteries ; the clean white sawdust down in the circus ; the company coming in and taking their places ; the fiddlers looking carelessly up at them while they tuned their instruments, as if they didn't want the play to begin, and knew it all beforehand ! What a glow was that, which burst upon them all, when that long, clear, brilliant row of lights came slowly up ; and what a feverish excitement when the little bell rang and the music began in good earnest, with strong parts for the drums, and sweet effects for the triangles." Their visit must have been only just in time, for on 8th June 1841 Astley's was for the third time burned down, the famous Ducrow, the rider, dying insane in consequence of the losses he sustained in the disaster.

After the performance the party repairs to an oyster-shop, it will be remembered, and in "a private box, fitted up with red curtains, white table-cloth and cruet-stand complete," consume oysters and beer. The entrance to Astley's was then between No. 6 and 7 Westminster Bridge Road, and at No. 12 was Francis's Oyster Rooms, where I have no doubt Kit and his friends regaled themselves.

The next London scene we have is also associated with

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Kit ; but what a different one it is !<sup>1</sup> No less than his trial after he has been wrongfully accused of stealing the five-pound note from Brass—who, it will be recalled, has arranged the whole nefarious plot. The Old Bailey is the scene of the trial ; the result of which is that Kit is found guilty and condemned.

Dick Swiveller's illness, and the attendance on him of "The Marchioness" ; the exposure of Brass's plot and the disappearance of his precious sister, Sally, pave the way to the scene where Quilp is hoist with his own petard, and drowned, owing to the fog, close to his wilderness on the Surrey shore. One may, parenthetically, note the description of that fog as forming a companion picture to the more famous one in *Bleak House*.

"The day, in the highest and brightest quarters of the town, was damp, dark, cold, and gloomy. In that low and marshy spot the fog filled every nook and corner with a thick dense cloud. Every object was obscured at one or two yards' distance. The warning lights and fires upon the river were powerless beneath this pall ; and but for a raw and piercing chilliness in the air, and now and then the cry of some bewildered boatman as he rested on his oars and tried to make out where he was, the river itself might have been miles away."

Quilp's body is thrown up on a swamp—"a dismal place where pirates had swung in chains through many a wintry night"—a picture that recalls Hogarth's famous print in "The Idle Apprentice," where the region around Cuckold's Point (on the Surrey side, a little below Rotherhithe Church) as it was called, answers the description exactly.

With the disappearance of Quilp, we can leave the book which his baleful presence has permeated. Nothing essential

<sup>1</sup> I may mention here that the Little Bethel of the story has been identified by some investigators as Zoar Chapel, in Great Alie Street, Whitechapel, but for a variety of reasons, I think this improbable, although Dickens may conceivably have borrowed some hints from the actual place.

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to our purpose remains to be noted, unless it be the cottage at Hampstead to which Dick Swiveller retired with his lady wife, "The Marchioness," and to which Mr Chuckster repaired regularly every Sunday, to purvey the news of the metropolis and to spend the day discoursing of the fashionable intelligence so dear to his host's heart.





FOUNTAIN COURT, TEMPLE  
FROM A PRINT BY NICHOLLS





## VIII

### MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT (1843-1844)

IF *Martin Chuzzlewit* is not Dickens's greatest book, and it is far from that, it contains one of his most outstanding characters, and one so incontestably a Londoner that under no circumstances could it, one thinks, have been produced in any other environment. Mrs Gamp does not appear till the middle of the novel ; and yet she seems to dominate the work from end to end—almost as much, indeed, as Pecksniff himself does. On looking back, after re-reading the book, it is that dirty, blowsy, selfish, gin-drinking old creature, with her inimitable jargon and her garrulity, who swims first into our mental ken ; and the London of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is chiefly, for us, the London around Kingsgate Street, where she lodged and took her nips “when she was so disposed.”

The topography of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a rather curious one, for it is divided between three such diverse centres as Salisbury, London, and America. As I presuppose in my readers a knowledge of the book, there is no necessity for me to recapitulate the opening chapters, which have as a background Salisbury, and the little adjacent village of Bemerton (where George Herbert mused beneath the trees), over which the cathedral's dominating spire rises.

Indeed, we do not get to London until, in Chapter VIII., we accompany Mr Pecksniff and his daughters thither.

The coach which conveyed them, together with the two Chuzzlewits, arrived, in its own good time, at the office in the city ; and although the street in which this coach-office was situated was already in a bustle, and indeed it was early morning, yet, we are told, “for any signs of day yet appearing in the sky it might have been midnight.” This was largely due to a dense fog ; and, for it was winter-time, a

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thick crust which lay upon the pavement like oil-cake proved, on the statement of one of the passengers acquainted with the city, to be snow.

What coach-office was this ? It is difficult to say with any certainty ; but I am inclined to think it was one of the numerous coaching inns then existing in Aldersgate Street, probably the George, formerly the White Hart, or perhaps the Bull and Gate, where the " Exeter Fly " (one hopes this was the conveyance of Mr Pecksniff) put up.

Having descended from the coach and left his luggage to be called for, Mr Pecksniff sets out, with a daughter on each arm, for Mrs Todgers's boarding-house. His way was circuitous and confused, but he knew it well. Diving " across the street, and then across other streets, and so up the queerest courts, and down the strangest alleys, and under the blindest archways . . . now skipping over a kennel, now running for his life from a coach and horses," he, with his party, at last stopped in a kind of paved yard near the Monument. Here Mr Pecksniff knocked at the door of a very dingy edifice, on whose front appeared a little oval board, bearing the inscription, " Commercial Boarding-House. M. Todgers." <sup>1</sup>

The combined efforts of ardent Dickensians, and they are as the sands of the sea in number, have never succeeded in identifying the actual position of Todgers's ; so all one can do is to refer the reader to the general description of the neighbourhood in the pages of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, with the hope that his investigations, aided by his imagination, may enable him to light on the place.

We know, however, what the interior of Todgers's was like, with its wainscoted parlour, its broad and gloomy staircase, and its thick and heavy balustrades ; its general air of being black, grimy and mouldy ; for Dickens has been as careful over his description of the place as of its inhabitants, and his word-picture may well form a companion

<sup>1</sup> Mr Jenkins, one of the boarders, mentions a rival establishment in Cannon Street.

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picture to that which the great Balzac has left us of the Pension Vauquer, in the Rue L'Estrapade, at Paris.

It is in the opening paragraphs of Chapter IX. that we get the minute description of the neighbourhood in which Todgers's found itself. A short abstract will be sufficient to convey the atmosphere of these surroundings. For instance, we are told that "you couldn't walk about in Todgers's neighbourhood, as you could in any other neighbourhood. You groped your way for an hour through lanes and bye-ways, and court-yards, and passages ; and you never once emerged upon anything that might be reasonably called a street" ; and Dickens proceeds in his whimsical way to detail instances of the tremendous difficulty of finding the place. We are told that several fruit-brokers had their marts near by, and that all day long a stream of porters from the wharves beside the river, each bearing on his back a bursting chest of oranges, poured slowly through the narrow passages ; while underneath the archway by the public-house, the knots of those who rested and regaled within, were piled from morning until night. "Strange solitary pumps were found near Todgers's ; and there were churches also by the dozen, with many a ghostly little churchyard, where paralysed old watchmen guarded the bodies of the dead at night. Among the narrow thoroughfares at hand, there lingered, too, here and there, an ancient doorway of carved oak ; but the mansions to which they gave entrance were then only used for store-houses, and were filled with wool and cotton, instead of with revelry and feasting. Near by were gloomy courtyards into which few but belated wayfarers ever strayed, and in the many adjacent no-thoroughfares, wine-merchants and wholesale dealers in grocery-ware had perfect little towns of their own ; while deep among the very foundations of these buildings, the ground was undermined and burrowed out into stables ; and to tell of half the queer old taverns that had a drowsy and secret existence near by would fill a goodly book, especially if an account were given of the quaint old guests who frequented their dimly lighted parlours."



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The house occupied by Todgers's itself had certain outstanding characteristics. For instance there was one staircase window in it at the side, on the ground floor, which, according to a tradition among the boarders, had not been opened for a hundred years ! But the chief mystery about the place was its cellarage, approachable only by a little back door and rusty grating which, in the memory of man, had had no connection with the house itself, but had always been the freehold of somebody else. On the roof was a sort of terrace with posts and lines, intended for drying clothes. From this aerie could be observed among the housetops, stretching far away, a long dark path which was the shadow of the Monument ; and close by stood the tall original, with every hair erect upon his golden head. Steeples, towers, belfries, shining vanes and masts of ships ; gables, housetops, and garret windows ; formed a forest in which smoke and noise contended for mastery. Such is the word-picture which can be evolved from Dickens's description of Todgers's and its neighbourhood. But where exactly was Todgers's ? Where the house in which Mr Pecksniff and his daughters found shelter ; in which so much of the inner working of the plot of *Martin Chuzzlewit* was evolved ?

It is, as I have said, perhaps impossible to identify with certainty the actual spot, but one would like to hazard a guess.

Could it have been No. 5 Pudding Lane, which is shown, in Horwood's map, as lying back from the thoroughfare, hidden away in its own little court. Certainly Miss Todgers's brassplate would in such a case seem superfluous ; but the optimism of lodging-house keepers is proverbial.

If this can be identified, then the churchyard into which old Martin Chuzzlewit looked, on his way to Todgers's, may well have been that of St George's, Botolph Lane.<sup>1</sup>

One need not particularise those whom the walls of

<sup>1</sup> All the district round the Monument has so greatly altered since the days of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, that it is only by contemporary maps that one can even approximately suggest a site for Todgers's.

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Todgers's sheltered,<sup>1</sup> although an exception should be made for the inimitable "Bailey," whose real name was supposed to be Benjamin, which by an ingenious form of metamorphosis became connected with that of George Barnwell who shot his uncle at Camberwell, and is the subject of a favourite ballad. It was at Camberwell, by the way, that Ruth Pinch lived as governess in a house "so big and fierce that its mere outside struck terror into vulgar minds," and was there visited by the Pecksniffs and Miss Todgers, as recorded in Chapter IX.

If we are only able approximately to say whereabouts Todgers's hid itself, we are hardly on surer ground with regard to the city offices of the Chuzzlewits. All Dickens tells us by way of identification is that "the old-established firm of Anthony Chuzzlewit & Son, Manchester Warehousemen . . . had its place of business in a very narrow street somewhere behind the Post Office; where every house was in the brightest summer morning very gloomy," and that it occupied "a dim, dirty, smoky, tumble-down, rotten old house." To this office Jonas Chuzzlewit took Charity and Mercy Pecksniff, on the occasion when he showed them the city and as many sights, in the way of bridges, churches, streets, outsides of theatres, and other *free* spectacles, in one afternoon, as most people see in a twelvemonth, and when he perpetrated one of the best pieces of fun with which he was acquainted, "the humour of which lay in taking a hackney-coach to the extreme limits of possibility for a shilling."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the offices in question were in Foster Lane, or Gutter Lane, or Noble Street, all close behind the General Post Office, and likely enough places.

Mr Pecksniff having at last transacted his mysterious business in London, much to the distress of Mrs Todgers and

<sup>1</sup> One should not forget Jenkins, if only for the fact that he was a regular frequenter of the parks on Sundays, and knew a great many carriages by sight.

<sup>2</sup> In those days the tariff for cab and coach hire was a shilling not exceeding a mile.

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her boarders, especially of "the youngest gentleman," withdraws himself and his olive branches from the scenes of their triumphs, and takes his place in the night coach at the office at which the party had arrived so short a time, as it seemed, at least to the young ladies, before. How on his arrival at home Pecksniff turns out young Martin Chuzzlewit, and how the latter determines to try his fortune in the New World, is told in the following chapter. By adventurous and easy stages Martin reaches London, where he arrives in the middle of the night, and not knowing where to find a tavern open, strolls about the streets and market-places till morning. "He found himself, about an hour before dawn," we are told, "in the humble regions of the Adelphi." This was a part of London which Dickens knew specially well—if such an adverb is necessary with regard to his metropolitan knowledge generally; as a boy he had haunted its Dark Arches; as a young man he had lodged in Buckingham Street, where he was to place David Copperfield later. Martin comes on an obscure public-house in this locality, and finds that he can have a bed there. Which of the many such places this was it is difficult to say; certainly it was not the White Swan, where the Micawbers lodged before setting out for Australia, for that was dirty and tumble-down, whereas Martin's inn, "though none of the gaudiest, was tolerably clean"; but it may have been the Salisbury Arms, as a writer on Dickens has suggested.<sup>1</sup>

So greatly has all this quarter altered since those days, owing to the advent of the railway terminus, the constant pulling down of old buildings, and the erection of new, that one's search is made doubly difficult. Nor, of course, is it possible to say which of the innumerable Golden Balls, "more than all the jugglers of Europe have juggled with," in the vicinity, secured his custom when he pawned his watch, and so inconveniently met Mr Montague Tigg. The apparition of Mark Tapley, at Martin's lodging, after having, as he tells that young gentleman, met his uncle in an old

<sup>1</sup> See *Dickens's London*, by T. Edgar Pemberton, 1876.



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churchyard in the city, notably the one in the vicinity of Todgers's, and on the occasion when old Martin was loitering there before his visit to Pecksniff, results, as we all know, in the two joining their fortunes and determining on seeing America together; although not before Mark has arranged for a final meeting between Martin and Mary Graham, in St James's Park—a meeting finally closed by the inexorable clock at the Horse Guards striking the hour of parting.

The course of the story now takes us far away from London—as far, indeed, as New York and more distant Eden, and we only return to the city when old Anthony Chuzzlewit dies in the presence of his miserable son and Pecksniff, mourned by none but his faithful old clerk Chuffey.

In consequence, it will be remembered, of Jonas's bad conscience—the sequel shows how much cause he had to fear suspicion of foul play—Pecksniff is desired by him to arrange for the funeral on the most lavish and even ostentatious scale possible. In the first place that oily gentleman sets out to find the nurse selected to lay out the dead body. This lady is the immortal Mrs Gamp, whose residence was in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, where she had a room over Poll Sweedlepipe the barber's shop, “next door but one to the celebrated mutton-pie shop, and directly opposite to the original cat's-meat warehouse; the renown of which establishments was duly heralded on their respective fronts.”

As Dickens was usually careful in giving accurate descriptions of localities, the presence of these places in the street may be accepted as facts, and one likes to record their existence because they are types which have long disappeared from our thoroughfares. But they are no more dead than is Kingsgate Street itself, although the site of the latter, at the corner of Southampton Row and Theobald's Road, is now covered by the buildings of the School of Arts and Crafts. One could have spared many more important Dickens landmarks, for the street and house in which, if we except Mr Pickwick, the most immortal of his characters once lived;



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for was it not there that that scene, probably the most life-like he ever imagined, took place—the scene of the historic quarrel of Sarah Gamp and Betsey Prig, when doubts were thrown upon the existence of Mrs Harris !<sup>1</sup>

The undertaker selected was Mr Mould, whose establishment, we are told, was “deep in the city and within the ward of Cheap—abutting on a churchyard, small and shady.” This church may well have been St Vedasts, Foster Lane, or, indeed, half-a-dozen others in this vicinity, but I like best to think it was St Olave’s, Old Jewry, and that it was in Old Jewry that Mr Mould lived and laboured.

Nothing of fresh topographical interest occurs for some chapters, as we oscillate between Salisbury, whither Jonas, after the funeral, accompanies Pecksniff and has his meeting with his uncle, and America, where Martin and Mark meet with such untoward adventures. One passage, during these experiences, may, however, be quoted, not merely because it refers to London, but because it illustrates (in an exaggerated way, of course) the ignorance of the Americans of those days in matters pertaining to the Old Country. Martin, it will be recalled, is introduced to, among many others, General Choke, when the latter gentleman puts the Englishman right on many points concerning his own country, and in the course of his allocution gives vent to the following remarkable statement, after having announced that the Queen lived in the Tower :— “Your Tower of London, sir, is nat’rally your royal residence. Being located in the immediate neighbourhood of your Parks, your Drives, your Triumphant Arches, your Opera, and your Royal Almack’s, it nat’rally suggests itself as the place for holding a luxurious and thoughtless court. And, consequently, the court is held there.” The General had become slightly mixed in his localities, and he seems to have been no less involved in his history. He might have been interested to know that the

<sup>1</sup> Kingsgate Street ran into Holborn between Nos. 116-117 in 1838, and Tallis shows the corners, one of which may have been Mrs Gamp’s abode.

Tower, which is not near the Parks or the once celebrated Almack's Assembly Rooms, ceased to be a Royal residence in the time of James I., although down to and including that monarch, every British sovereign had at one time or another occupied it.

In Chapter XXV. we return to England and find ourselves watching, at the Bull Inn, Holborn, with a somnolent Mrs Gamp, the tossings and ravings of the mysterious patient, Lewsome, who is battling with fever in one of its rooms, and who, in his delirium, indicates more to his watcher than some people could have wished her to know. The Bull, or the Black Bull, is now no more, its site being covered by a portion of Messrs Gamage's premises, but one remembers it with its Black Bull rampant over the entrance, guarding, as it were, the premises.

A person whose ways were as mysterious as was the personality of Lewsome, but whom we have met before as Montague Tigg, now reappears, metamorphosed into Tigg Montague, with young Bailey as a body-servant, and rooms in no less fashionable a thoroughfare than Pall Mall. There might Bailey be seen any day of the week "gazing indolently at society from beneath the apron of his master's cab," and driving slowly up and down in waiting for his "governor," occasionally varying the monotony of this proceeding by "going round St James's Square at a hand gallop, and coming slowly into Pall Mall by another entry, as if, in the interval, his pace had been a perfect crawl." One imagines Bailey to have driven up John Street, the shortest street in London by the way, and to have emerged by the Army and Navy Club at the farther corner of the square, although in those days this club-house did not exist, it not having been erected till 1848-1850 ; while the Junior Carlton, at the corner opposite, only came into being in the sixties of the nineteenth century. Which was the actual house in Pall Mall inhabited by Tigg Montague is not specified, but we are told that the lower storey was occupied by a wealthy tradesman, and that Tigg had all the upper part. In those days there were

more lodgings and fewer clubs here, and even approximate accuracy in guessing would be impossible.

Only thirty-five years before the date of the story Pall Mall had been lighted, the first street in London to be so, by gas, and the removal of Carlton House (1827) and the erection of the Duke of York's Column were relatively recent events. It would be pleasant if Tigg's rooms could be proved to be in No. 51 (now rebuilt, alas !), for that had once been the famous shop of Robert Dodsley and a favourite haunt of Pope, Walpole, Young, Akenside and Burke. The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Insurance Company was, we know, one of those mushroom concerns that spring, like Minerva from Jove's brain, fully armed and equipped, on to an astonished world. It had a branch over a tailor's at the West End of the town, and its headquarters were in a new street in the City. It owed its genesis to the fertility of David Crimple, otherwise Crimp, combined with the audacity of Tigg himself. Among its *personnel* was that mysterious gentleman, Nadgett, who finally runs Jonas Chuzzlewit to earth, and who "would sit on 'Change for hours, looking at everybody who walked in and out, and would do the like at Garraway's." Both these places have now an old-world sound. To go "on 'Change" was once one of a merchant's regular occupations ; indeed I knew, a few years ago, an old gentleman, a relic of a former day, who invariably spoke of doing this. One imagined him solemnly pacing the tessellated pavement in the Royal Exchange, and gazing wonderingly at the frescoes which now seem the only reasonable objective for anyone to go there. Garraway's carries us back to the eighteenth century and even earlier. It was situated in 'Change Alley—Changed Alley it should be called, for Garraway's was closed in 1866, and even Baker's famous chop-house, where Nadgett, no doubt, partook occasionally of a frugal and silent meal, has been converted into offices. The rush and tumult of the South Sea traders who flocked into Garraway's in 1720 has died away, and the place lives in the verse of Swift and the prose of Addison and Steele.

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Meanwhile the story has been moving with its other protagonists : Martin and Mark have returned to England ; Tom Pinch has been turned out of the Pecksniffian abode, and has arrived by the Salisbury coach and found a temporary shelter with John Westlock, in Furnival's Inn, Holborn. Furnival's Inn is no more ; the great red-brick buildings of the Prudential Assurance Offices stand on its site ; but I am glad I can well remember it and so could once see the rooms where Dickens himself first became famous with *Pickwick*, and the spot which he has introduced not infrequently into his later books.

Contemporary illustrations show what the place looked like when Westlock had rooms there and Tom Pinch suddenly one morning appeared in his doorway, after having spent some hours asleep before the fire in the coaching inn, whither he had been borne through the long night.

Westlock's rooms were within a quarter of an hour's walk from the coaching inn, but seemed to Tom a long way off, a fact due to his going two or three miles out of the straight road to make a short cut and not knowing his way.

We are told how he refuses Westlock's offer of hospitality, and, having carried off Ruth from her durance at Camberwell, roams about for hours looking for cheap lodgings. At length these are discovered "in a singular little old-fashioned house, up a blind street," which house afforded them two bedrooms and a triangular parlour. The lodgings were situated in Islington, a neighbourhood selected as likely to be reasonable and as having at least once been called "merry."

In those days Islington was a very different place from what it has since become ; indeed, it was quite suburban and a favourite residential quarter for clerks and people with limited incomes. Over and over again do we meet Dickens's characters in its purlieus. It was even then a less complicated business to find one's way to or from it than it can be said to be to-day ; but Tom had not a largely developed bump of locality, and then, after Salisbury, London is rather



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confusing. Anyhow, in setting off to tell Westlock in Furnival's Inn of his success in finding a home for himself, he becomes hopelessly lost. He determined not to ask his way, with the result that "on he went, looking up all the streets he came near, and going up half of them; and thus, by dint of not being true to Goswell Street, and filing off into Aldermanbury, and bewildering himself in Barbican, and being constant to the wrong point of the compass in London Wall, and then getting himself crosswise into Thames Street . . . he found himself, at last, hard by the Monument."

There he determines to ask his way of the "Man in the Monument," but before he can do so, is accosted by Charity Pecksniff, who happens to be passing Wren's edifice at the moment, and who persuades him to look in at Todgers's, in order that she may introduce him to the melancholy Mr Moddle, by whom he is eventually conducted to Furnival's Inn.

Meanwhile another character in the book, who was essentially a Londoner of the first water, was to be observed passing in a secret and mysterious way about the streets, having little occasion for guidance therein by anyone—the very antithesis of Tom Pinch, who turns out to be his lodger. This is Nadgett who, in the course of his tracking down of Jonas Chuzzlewit, might at one time have been seen constantly going down Cornhill at a certain hour of the day; but was later to be observed in Holborn, coming out of Kingsgate Street, and anon ringing the bell "in a covert under-handed way," of Mr Tigg Montague's abode in Pall Mall. Another almost equally mysterious person is Mr Fips, of Austin Friars, who, on behalf of old Martin Chuzzlewit, inducts Tom into his duties as secretary and librarian to his then unknown patron. Tom and Westlock go to interview Mr Fips, and find him in Austin Friars, "in a very dark passage on the first floor, oddly situated at the back of a house, across some leads, they found a little blear-eyed glass door up in one corner, with MR FIPS painted on it in characters which were meant to be transparent." In those days this spot,

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where the Augustinian monastery founded by Humphrey Bohun, Earl of Hereford, in 1253, had stood, still possessed an ancient air about it. A fire, in 1862, destroyed all but the outer walls of the church, which is really the nave of the monastery chapel; and much building has taken place in the precincts. If one could identify Fips's office as being at No. 18, it would be interesting, for here James and Horace Smith once lived, and here the *Rejected Addresses* were written.

An appointment is made by Fips with Tom for a meeting at the Temple Gate, in Fleet Street, otherwise the gate which gives access to Middle Temple Lane, and which was erected from Wren's designs in 1684. Having done so, Fips "led the way through sundry lanes and courts, into one more quiet and more gloomy than the rest, and, singling out a certain house, ascended a common staircase: taking from his pocket, as he went, a bunch of rusty keys. Stopping before a door upon an upper story, which had nothing but a yellow smear of paint where custom would have placed the tenant's name, he began to beat the dust out of one of these keys, very deliberately, upon the great broad hand-rail of the balustrade." These chambers were in Pump Court—so named from its famous pump (not, by the way, the pump Lamb refers to, which was in Hare Court), where the disastrous fire, which destroyed so much of the Temple, originated in January 1679.

The rooms to which Tom had been so mysteriously introduced by Mr Fips, and in which he was to pass so many happy hours among the books, are thus described: "There were two rooms on that floor: and in the first or outer one a narrow staircase, leading to two more above. These last were fitted up as bed-chambers . . . although the fittings were of a bygone fashion. . . . Movables of every kind lay strewn about, without the least attempt at order, and were intermixed with boxes, hampers, and all sorts of lumber. On all the floors were piles of books, to the amount, perhaps, of some thousands of volumes: these, still in bales: those, wrapped in paper,

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as they had been purchased : others scattered singly or in heaps : not one upon the shelves which lined the walls." Never surely before or since Dominie Sampson, at a similar sight, raised his arms to heaven, and shouted "Prodigious !" had a book-lover such a feast spread out before him.

Of Tom's daily occupation here, cataloguing, arranging, sorting and often dipping into book after book, this part of the story is eloquent. "There was a ghostly air about these uninhabited chambers in the Temple, and attending every circumstance of Tom's employment there, which had a strange charm in it. Every morning when he shut his door at Islington, he turned his face towards an atmosphere of unaccountable fascination, as surely as he turned it to the London smoke. . . . Passing from the roar and rattle of the streets into the quiet courtyards of the Temple, was the first preparation. Every echo of his footsteps sounded to him like a sound from the old walls and pavements, wanting language to relate the histories of the dim, dismal rooms ; to tell him what lost documents were decaying in forgotten corners of the shut-up cellars, from whose lattices such mouldy sighs came breathing forth as he went past ; to whisper of dark bins of rare old wine, bricked up in vaults among the old foundations of the Halls ; or mutter in a lower tone yet darker legends of the cross-legged knights, whose marble effigies were in the church."

Few passages I think have been written which better describe the special atmosphere of the Temple and its purlieu than this which tells of its effect on the simple, impressionable mind of the gentle, lovable Tom Pinch. Nor are the word-pictures of the neighbourhoods through which Tom and Ruth used to pass, in their daily walks about London, before the duties in Pump Court began, less descriptive. The two became great frequenters of the market-places, bridges, quays and especially the steamboat wharves ; "for it was very lively and fresh to see the people hurrying away upon their many schemes of business or pleasure ; and it made Tom glad to think that there was that

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much change and freedom in the monotonous routine of city lives." Many and many a pleasant stroll they had, too, in Covent Garden "snuffing up the perfume of the fruits and flowers, wondering at the magnificence of the pineapples and melons; catching glimpses down side avenues, of rows and rows of old women, seated on inverted baskets, shelling peas. . . . Many and many a pleasant stroll they had among the poultry markets, where ducks and fowls . . . lay stretched out in pairs, ready for cooking; where there were speckled eggs in mossy baskets . . . live birds in coops and cages . . . rabbits alive and dead, innumerable. Many a pleasant stroll they had among the cool, refreshing, silvery fish-stalls, with a kind of moonlight effect about their stock-in-trade, excepting always for the ruddy lobsters. Many a pleasant stroll among the waggon-loads of fragrant hay, beneath which dogs and tired waggoners lay fast asleep, oblivious of the pieman and the public-house. But never half so good a stroll as down among the steamboats on a bright morning."

Some such scenes may now be encountered, say in Covent Garden or in Billingsgate Market, but the steamboats, as Tom Pinch and his sister knew them, are no more—the L.C.C. fleet is a poor substitute for those bustling vessels that left the Tower Wharf or Wapping, and went to Gravesend and Greenwich and even to Antwerp. Then "little steamboats dashed up and down the stream incessantly. Tiers upon tiers of vessels, scores of masts, labyrinths of tackle, idle sails, splashing oars, gliding row-boats, lumbering barges, sunken piles, with ugly lodgings for the water-rat within their mud-discoloured nooks; church steeples, warehouses, house-roofs, arches, bridges, men and women, children, casks, cranes, bones, horses, coaches, idlers, and hard-labourers: there they were, all jumbled up together, any summer morning, far beyond Tom's power of separation."

It will be remembered how Tom and Ruth on one of these visits were particularly interested in a certain packet-boat on which the turmoil and excitement were specially noticeable; which vessel was bound for no less distant a port than



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Antwerp ; and how Tom is induced, by Nadgett, whom in his disguise he does not know, to hand a note to Jonas Chuzzlewit which stops that gentleman, then about to fly the country, from continuing his journey, and causes him to return to land dragging with him his ill-treated wife, the Merry Pecksniff of earlier days. Mrs Gamp also appears at this juncture, and although her remarks are always pregnant, she, on this occasion, makes a statement which is particularly important, for in the course of one of her allocutions she not merely mentions Mrs Harris, but goes so far as faintly to adumbrate the whereabouts of that "blessed creature's" domicile, in the following notable words, "*which her name, my love, is Harris, Mrs Harris through the square and up the steps a-turnin' round by the tobacker shop.*" I would not "seek to proticipate," but I live in hope that one day I may stand forth to the world as the discoverer of Mrs Harris's abode. To seek to prove her identity seems as nothing to being able to point to a certain street, to a particular house in that street, and to say in triumph "there Mrs Harris lived."

During the time when Mrs Gamp is making this tremendous disclosure, Mr Nadgett had appointed "the man who never came, to meet him on London Bridge. He was certainly looking over the parapet, and down upon the steamboat wharf at that moment. It could not have been for pleasure ; he never took pleasure. No. He must have had some business there." The reader, as he proceeds, will know what it was.

We are carried away from London, after this, in the uncongenial society of Tigg Montague and Jonas Chuzzlewit—and we know how that ill-starred adventure terminated. Far pleasanter is it to return once more to London and to loiter with Ruth and John Westlock, in Fountain Court. You will remember that there was an arrangement between Tom and Ruth that they should meet there before setting out homewards. The "plot" was this: "Coming from Fountain Court, he was just to glance down the steps leading

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into Garden Court, and to look once all round him ; and if Ruth had come to meet him, there he would see her." Well, it chanced one day that, either she was a little too soon or Tom a little too late—anyhow Tom was not there, but somebody else was, he happened to be passing that way, and that somebody was John Westlock. That was the beginning of it—not in Fountain Court that time, but in the sanctuary of Garden Court. Westlock suggests that Tom and Ruth shall go home with him to dinner, and away they go, Tom stopping under Temple Bar to laugh at John's idea of the proper way of making a beefsteak pudding, the point of which was, of course, the famous pudding made by Ruth at Islington, on an eventful occasion.

Westlock's rooms were, as we know, in Furnival's Inn, and Dickens, who once lived there himself,<sup>1</sup> takes occasion to tell us that there are "snug chambers in those Inns where the bachelors live, and, for the desolate fellows they pretend to be, it is quite surprising how well they get on." John's rooms were the perfection of neatness and convenience, and although he was very pathetic on the subject of his dreary life, if he were anything but comfortable, the fault was certainly not in his accommodation. When Dickens proceeds to remark that "there is little enough to see in Furnival's Inn"; but that it was "a shady, quiet place, echoing to the footsteps of the stragglers who have business there; and rather monotonous and gloomy on summer evenings," he is speaking from personal experience. One wonders what he would have to say to the vast red structure that to-day rises on the site of the old place, and has obliterated the chambers he and Westlock occupied, leaving nothing to show for them but a tablet and a bust.

We exchange the repose of Furnival's Inn for the din of the City, in the following chapter; but even in the midst of its turmoil we are introduced to a place which is in itself quiet enough, although it is with the secrecy of crime: the room in which Jonas hid himself before starting on his

<sup>1</sup> From 1834 to 1837.

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murderous errand after Tigg Montague, and to which he returned a blood-stained craven. This room was on the ground floor, at the back of the premises occupied by the Chuzzlewit firm. "The ground on which this chamber stood had, at one time, not within his recollection, been a yard, and had been converted to its present purpose for use as an office. It was lighted by a dirty skylight, and had a door in the wall, opening into a narrow covered passage or blind alley, not in much use as a thoroughfare at any hour. But it had an outlet in a neighbouring street." The locality we know was somewhere "behind the Post Office," and that is all we are told, although, as I have before suggested, Foster Lane or Gutter Lane or Noble Street may well contain the site of the Chuzzlewit offices.

The return of young Martin ; his interview with Westlock and Lewsome ; and the latter's revelations as to the doings of Jonas, do not concern us ; except that when the friends had resolved on their plan of campaign, their immediate object was to find a room for Martin, who at last discovers a suitably cheap one in a court in the Strand not far from Temple Bar, where he engages two garrets for himself and Mark Tapley. There are plenty of courts in this neighbourhood to choose from, but I always like to think the actual spot was Devereux Court,<sup>1</sup> standing on the site of the old Grecian Coffee-house, redolent with the one-time presence of Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith, at Tom's Coffee-house within its exiguous precincts.

There are not many remaining references to London in the pages of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, to which special reference need be made ; because much of the ground over which we have already gone is again the scene of subsequent events. It will be recalled, for instance, how Nadgett, describing his shadowing of Jonas, tells how he watched the murderer from a garret window opposite the Chuzzlewit offices, or rather opposite that little chamber already described, where Jonas hid and changed his clothes. How, too, he, Nadgett, followed

<sup>1</sup> As an alternative I suggest Thanet Place, close by ; now no more.

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Jonas when he went down the steps of London Bridge and sank the bundle, containing his disguise, in the river; and who will forget old Martin's tremendous denunciation of Pecksniff in the rooms in Pump Court, when he was surrounded by so many of those whose fortunes we have been following, and by the books which Tom Pinch had arranged on the shelves with such loving care. Above all, who can but remember the last glimpse we get of Fountain Court, which the presence of Ruth and John Westlock has turned into a metropolitan garden of Eden (not subject to any by-laws), and in which the whispering waters of the fountain itself seemed to sparkle with an added brilliancy, because they irradiated hope and faith and love.



## IX

### DOMBEY AND SON (1847-1848)

DOMBEY AND SON cannot be regarded as one of Dickens's outstanding works. It contains no character which shares the prominence of Micawber in *David Copperfield*, Mrs Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, or Sam Weller in *Pickwick*. It is drab. Dombey himself is as wooden as the figure outside Sol Gills's shop. Carker is all teeth, and Edith Dombey all frown. Florence is a charming but almost too pathetic figure, and Paul appears sufficiently on the scene to make us realise that here, as in the case of Little Nell, Dickens gave himself up to a fit of unrestrained sentimentalism. Captain Cuttle and Bunsby form the much-needed comic relief. But the Captain is, I think, a bit disappointing, and Bunsby is so cryptic as to verge on the incoherent. Perhaps the two best characters are Toots and Susan Nipper; they are both excellent. That the book possesses fine episodes—that concerning the life at Dr Blimber's school for instance—is undeniable—what work of Dickens is without them?—but in most essentials *Dombey and Son* is, in my opinion, with the exception of *Little Dorrit*, the least inspired of the great novels.

So far, too, as it concerns us here, it is somewhat disappointing. Its topography, especially its London topography, is curiously illusive. We can but approximately place the house of Mr Dombey, or the offices of Dombey and Son; the home of the Toodle family, or the shop of Solomon Gills, or the residence of Cousin Feenix. But after all, approximation is better than nothing; and we must make the most of what Dickens chooses to give us.

As its readers are aware, the story opens at the house of Mr Dombey, on the occasion of Paul's birth and the death of



HOUSES ON THE NORTH SIDE OF LEADENHALL STREET  
FROM A PRINT BY B. HOWLETT



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his shadowy mother. In Chapter III. we get a description of this very dreary abode :

“Mr Dombey’s house,” we read, “was a large one on the shady side of a tall, dark, dreadfully genteel street in the region between Portland Place and Bryanston Square.” That is all we are told as to its position. But the mention of these two places enables us to limit approximately our area of search.

Most of this region was then, if not exactly new, certainly not old, for although much of it had been developed during the eighteenth century, a fresh impetus in the building of large houses took place during the earlier years of the nineteenth (Bryanston Square, for instance, was formed about 1810), and in 1746, and for many years after, it was open fields, with the gallows at Tyburn standing where Connaught Place is to-day.

It is impossible to say which of the many streets running through this neighbourhood in Dickens’s time, was the one selected by the novelist in which to place the Dombey residence. The first chapters of the book were written at Lausanne, and it is quite likely that the writer had no actual house in his eye, although the mention of a “circular back” and the “two gaunt trees in the gravelled yard” seems to indicate some special habitation; and perhaps Mansfield Street is as good a guess as one may hazard.

So much for the position of the Dombey residence. We are told further that “it was a corner house, with great wide areas containing cellars frowned upon by barred windows, and leered at by crooked-eyed doors leading to dustbins; containing a whole suite of drawing-rooms looking upon a gravelled yard, where two gaunt trees, with blackened trunks and branches, rattled rather than rustled, their leaves were so smoke-dried.” Nor was its interior more prepossessing, and after Mrs Dombey’s death its furniture was covered up and heaped together, the looking-glasses being papered over with old journals, its chandeliers encased in Holland bags each “looking like a monstrous tear depending from



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the ceiling's eye." Mr Dombey inhabited three rooms on the ground floor, and Florence and the servants lived in the upper rooms. Much of the furniture was old-fashioned and grim, for it, as well as the house, had belonged to Mr Dombey's father.

The position of the city offices of the great firm of which Mr Dombey was the head can also be but guessed at. "Gog and Magog held their state within ten minutes' walk; the Bank of England was their magnificent neighbour; just round the corner stood the rich East India House." It was in a nautical neighbourhood, for "anywhere in the immediate vicinity there might be seen pictures of ships speeding away full sail to all parts of the world; outfitting warehouses ready to pack off anybody anywhere, fully equipped in half-an-hour; and little timber midshipmen in obsolete naval uniforms, eternally employed outside the shop doors of nautical instrument makers in taking observations of the hackney coaches."

In investigating the probable site of the Dombey offices one must remember that they were "in a court where there was an old-established stall of fruit at the corner"; a court where, too, "perambulating merchants, of both sexes, offered for sale . . . slippers, pocket-books, sponges, dogs' collars, and Windsor soap."

We know that East India Avenue runs where the East India House formerly stood, on the south of Leadenhall Street, which building was, as we have seen, just round the corner from Dombey's premises.

I am therefore inclined to place these premises in one of the courts off Gracechurch Street, Bell Yard or Corbett's Court, for instance, which would fit in with Dickens's description, and is a more likely spot than in Billiter Street, which seems to me the only alternative.

If this is mere speculation, the site of Sol Gills's shop is generally recognised as a certainty, and No. 157 Leadenhall Street, north side, is pointed out as the identical place. It was then occupied by Messrs Norie & Wilson, as Tallis

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shows, and the little wooden midshipman of which Sol Gills was so proud, and which then stood at its door, accompanied this firm when they removed to the Minories. Here Walter lived with his uncle, and from here he went daily to Messrs Dombey's offices. As we know, those offices were on the opposite side of the street to that on which stood Sol Gills's shop, for when Sol is waiting for Walter on the first day of the latter's employment at Dombey's "he looked out of the window to see if his nephew might be crossing the road."

That "precious dark set of offices" must have been on the south side, and helps to confirm my suggestion as to their whereabouts.<sup>1</sup>

Walter, by the way, had been to school at Peckham. In those days Peckham was quite a countrified place; to-day it is a largely populated area on the outer fringe of South London. It would be interesting if it could be proved that Walter's school was that, in Meeting House Lane, at which Goldsmith had been an usher under the Rev. John Milner.

The Mile End turnpike mentioned in Chapter IV. stood just beyond the London Hospital, dividing High Street, Whitechapel, from the Mile End Road, exactly a mile from Aldgate.

The christening of Paul took place in a church which was approached by steps and possessed a portico. If, as is likely, it was the church of the parish in which Mr Dombey lived, then it would be All Souls', Langham Place, which Nash built between 1822 and 1824, and which was then a relatively new erection. It is a long cry from this fashionable neighbourhood to Staggs's Gardens, where "Mrs Richards," the nurse, dwelt in the bosom of her (the Toodle) family, and whither, on an unlucky day, for herself, also for Paul, she carried the "Son" of the famous house.

Staggs's Gardens, Camden Town, was at that period in a

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XXXIX., where Cuttle (in charge of the shop) steps "over" to Leadenhall market. By the way Mr Allbut, writing in 1886, records the fact that there was then a Messrs Dombey & Son at 120 Cheapside.

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state of upheaval, incidental to the formation of the London and North-Western Railway. Dickens thus describes it :

“The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down ; streets broken through and stopped ; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground ; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up ; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill ; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere ; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable ; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height ; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations ; carcasses of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls ; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth ; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights-of-way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.”

I may remind the reader that the North-Western Railway was an offshoot of the London and Birmingham Railway, originally opened in 1834 and extended in 1838. The great hall of Euston Station was first used in 1849, so that it was unknown to Mr Dombey and the Major when they travelled to Leamington by this route, later in the story.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Staggs's Buildings is, of course, a fictitious name.

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Where the hovel inhabited by the dreadful old Mrs Brown, into whose hands Florence falls, was situated, it is difficult, well-nigh impossible, to say. The child was lost near Staggs's Buildings, and when accosted by the harridan was not far from that spot. She was taken by "some very uncomfortable places, such as brick-fields and tile-yards, down a dirty lane," where she was ushered into "a shabby little house . . . full of cracks and crevices." When at last she is let free, Mrs Brown conducts her "through a labyrinth of narrow streets and lanes and alleys, which emerged, after a long time, upon a stable-yard, with a gateway at the end, whence the roar of a great thoroughfare made itself audible."

It was probably in Agar Town that Mrs Brown lived ; a district then sparsely inhabited, but after the coming of railways, largely occupied by the warehouses of the Midland Railway. In 1851, so poor and wretched was this quarter still that Dickens himself then called it a suburban Connemara.

How Florence finds her way to the purlieus of Thames Street and meets Walter, by whom she is first taken to his uncle's shop and then home, is told in Chapter VI.

In the following chapter we are introduced to Miss Tox, in her home in Princess Place, in a little house in the west end "where it stood in the shade like a poor relation of the great street round the corner, coldly looked down upon by mighty mansions." There was another house here, where Major Bagstock resided and kept watch in his "devilish sly" way on his opposite neighbours.

Where is, or was, Princess Place ? Giving on to it was "an immense pair of gates, with an immense pair of lion-headed knockers which were never opened, and were supposed to constitute a disused entrance to somebody's stables." You will not find it in any London Directory ; and all one can say is that it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Portland Place.

I have often wondered whether little Mill Hill Place, at the back of what was once Harcourt House, on the west side



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of Cavendish Square, was not in Dickens's eye when he selected a spot for Miss Tox's dwelling. The immense pair of gates may well have belonged to the outbuildings of the town residence of that eccentric Duke whose supposed identity with Mr Druce, of the Baker Street Bazaar, caused such excitement years ago.

The story takes us, with Paul, to Miss Pipchin's and then to Dr Blimber's at Brighton, where we have no need to follow him. To our purpose rather is it to wander in Bishopsgate Street Without, where one Brogley, a sworn broker and appraiser, kept a shop, or near the India Docks, where Captain Cuttle lived in durance to Mrs MacStinger, at No. 9 Brig Place. The ditches and pollard willows, mentioned by Dickens as then existing, would be hard to find now in this locality. Probably Emmett Street, or at least its immediate neighbourhood, was the spot where the Captain lived "on the brink of a little canal."

The church which that worthy attended regularly was, no doubt, St Anne's, Limehouse, "which hoisted the Union Jack every Sunday morning." This church, which had been built by Hawksmoor, during 1712-1724, was first opened in 1729. Cuttle knew it before the fire which seriously damaged the interior in 1850.

When Paul is dying and wants to see his old nurse, Walter goes in search of her in Staggs's Gardens. But things had, in the meantime, happened in that neighbourhood: the Toodles' house had gone, and they lived in the Company's own buildings near by.

"There was no such place as Staggs's Gardens. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer-houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond. The miserable waste ground, where the refuse-matter had been heaped of yore, was swallowed up and gone; and in its frowzy stead were tiers of warehouses, crammed with rich goods and costly merchandise. The old by-streets now swarmed with passengers and vehicles of

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every kind : the new streets that had stopped disheartened in the mud and waggon-ruts, formed towns within themselves, originating wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves, and never tried nor thought of until they sprung into existence. Bridges that had led to nothing, led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks. The carcasses of houses, and beginnings of new thoroughfares, had started off upon the line at steam's own speed, and shot away into the country in a monster train.

“As to the neighbourhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its straggling days, that had grown wise and penitent; as any Christian might in such a case, and now boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation. There were railway patterns in its drapers' shops, and railway journals in the windows of its newsmen. There were railway hotels, office-houses, lodging-houses, boarding-houses ; railway plans, maps, views, wrappers, bottles, sandwich-boxes, and timetables ; railway hackney coach and cab stands ; railway omnibuses, railway streets and buildings, railway hangers-on and parasites, and flatterers out of all calculation. There was even railway time observed in clocks, as if the sun itself had given in.”

Trains bulk largely in *Dombey and Son*, and we go by one, with Mr Dombey and the Major, to Leamington. But they make the journey in a very different manner from what they would to-day ; their travelling carriage being hoisted on to a truck and carried to its destination with its owner and his friend inside. They went from the Euston terminus, then in its extreme youth ; and descended at Birmingham, whence the further journey to Leamington was made in the carriage on its own wheels. We may leave them there in the company of the egregious Mrs Skewton and her haughty daughter, and return to Florence alone in the dreary family mansion, and Mrs MacStinger at home in the vicinity of the Docks, with Captain Bunsby's vessel lying hard by Ratcliffe ; while Captain Cuttle, after his interview with Florence and Bunsby, regarding Walter's safety, walks up and down

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Leadenhall Street several times and dines late, "at a certain angular little tavern in the City, with a public parlour like a wedge, to which glazed hats much resorted." Nor must we forget Sir Barnet and Lady Skittles at their pretty villa at Fulham, on the banks of the Thames, where Florence paid a visit and the inimitable Toots haunted.

We are, too, kept in London by the marriage of Dombey and Edith Skewton, to which end the Dombey mansion is redeccorated, and Mrs Skewton borrows, for the occasion, the house of her Cousin Feenix, in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square. Any house, so long as it has a portico,<sup>1</sup> will do in that fashionable thoroughfare, for the identical dwelling.

The church at which the ceremony takes place, and where little Paul and his mother lie buried, and where, too, the former was christened, was All Souls', Langham Place, and the ceremony was of the usual type of such functions in those days, when a band attended, and marrow-bones and cleavers, and the men rang the bells, which they have been practising in the wilds of Battle Bridge, what time Cousin Feenix gets shaved at Long's Hotel, in Bond Street,<sup>2</sup> preparatory to the event.

Contrast is the marked note observable in *Dombey and Son* : the contrast between Mrs Skewton and her daughter, and old Mrs Brown and hers ; the contrast between the coldness of Dombey to Florence, and the warmth of affection between Sol Gills and Walter, the contrast between the two Carkers.

But this, in the case of the last-named, is not merely personal : we get the contrast between the houses of pride and humility, between those of luxury and genteel poverty ; and this is exemplified in the richness and almost sybarite-like surroundings of Carker at Norwood, and the quiet, *res angusta* of those about his brother John and his sister, on

<sup>1</sup> See Phiz's illustration.

<sup>2</sup> The Jackson who kept the boxing-room in Bond Street mentioned by Cousin Feenix, was the famous pugilist patronised by Byron. A picture of his rooms was drawn by Cruikshank, for Pierce Egan's *Tom and Jerry*.



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the other side of London, near the busy Great North Road of by-gone days.

“The neighbourhood in which it stands has as little of the country to recommend it, as it has of the town. It is neither of the town nor country. The former, like the giant in his travelling boots, has made a stride and passed it, and has set his brick-and-mortar heel a long way in advance; but the intermediate space between the giant’s feet, as yet, is only blighted country, and not town; and, here, among a few tall chimneys belching smoke all day and night, and among the brick-fields and the lanes where turf is cut, and where the fences tumble down, and where the dusty nettles grow, and where a scrap or two of hedge may yet be seen, and where the bird-catcher still comes occasionally, though he swears every time to come no more—this second home is to be found.”

There are but few references to London localities, after this, except that the whole book is, with exceptions here and there, permeated with what I may call the London atmosphere. We have occasional remarks on places whose names conjure up landmarks of the city as it was in early Victorian days, such as of Islington, for example, where Mr Morfin lived and played on his ’cello; the Round Pond, in Kensington Gardens, where the friends of the much tormented Briggs (of Blimber’s) always expected to see his hat floating on the water and an unfinished exercise lying on the bank; Peekham, where the two old maiden ladies lived, with whom Mr Feeder (one of Blimber’s masters) made arrangements to board; Ball’s Pond, perpetuated by Ball’s Pond Road, Islington, where Perch, the messenger at Dombey’s, lives; and Oxford Market, between Oxford Street and Castle Street, to which Towlinson, the footman, contemplates retiring and leading an altered and blameless existence as a greengrocer.

Then there is Finchley, in whose wilds Toots loiters to get chickweed for Florence’s canary; and the Royal Exchange, where he goes to wind up his watch; and Aldgate Pump



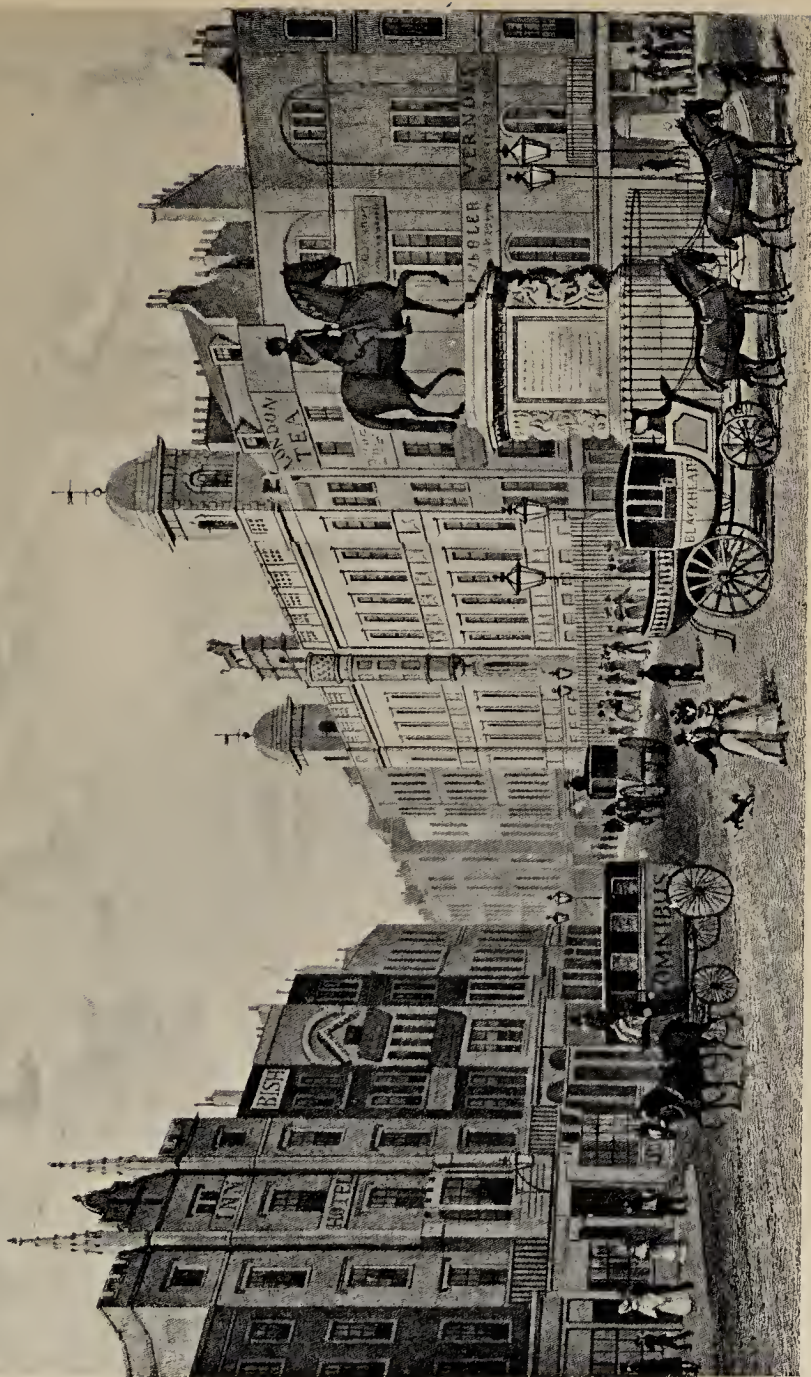
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which he circumnavigates, when the sight of Walter's and Florence's happiness is too much even for his unselfishness.

After rather a gloomy book it is pleasant to close on a happy note—the uniting of the two loving and sorely tried hearts of Florence and Walter. They are to be married, and the church selected “was a mouldy old church in a yard, hemmed in by a labyrinth of back streets and courts, with a little burying ground round it, and itself buried in a kind of vault, formed by the neighbouring houses, and paved with echoing stones. It was a great dim, shabby pile, with high old oaken pews, among which about a score of people lost themselves every Sunday.” It had a steeple, and “in almost every yard and blind place near, there was a church.”

Which of the many clustering in this part of London was the one selected? One might hazard a guess, but hardly one which amounted to even an approximate certainty; so perhaps it is best to leave it to the reader's imagination. Anyone with ample leisure might perhaps light on it, and he would earn the gratitude of all Dickensians.

Whichever it be it has at least this memory in its keeping. Hither they come, having walked from that other church where Paul lies buried, taking the streets that are the quietest, and passing from the stuccoed West End to the East, where there are warehouses and busy carmen stopping the way; and at last stand before the altar of the church “which has a strange smell like a cellar,” and a dusty old beadle “who has something to do with a Worshipful Company who have got a Hall in the next yard, with a stained-glass window in it.” Could this church have been St Mary, Aldermanbury, in whose little churchyard the bust of Shakespeare now stands? Certainly Brewers' Hall, one of the few possessing a stained-glass window, is close to it, and may be said to be in the next yard, if one can be allowed so to term Addle Street.



THE GOLDEN CROSS, CHARING CROSS  
FROM A PRINT DATED 1826



## X

### DAVID COPPERFIELD (1849-1850)

IN *David Copperfield* Dickens reached the highest point of his achievement. In many of his later books more care is evident; a determination to improve both in style and characterisation is obvious; but there is a freshness and spontaneity about this book (Dickens's favourite, by the way) which place it among the masterpieces of English novel-writing. It is, as the French say, *de cœur*; and it is so largely autobiographical that one feels its author had but to draw on a memory rich enough to be, in the alembic of his brain, a substitute for inspiration. It is, too, in other respects a beautiful book, as Thackeray, in a famous eulogy, witnessed. The characters it portrays, the lessons it teaches, are, as a whole, beautiful; and that culminating touch where Peggotty, finding Little Em'ly, throws a handkerchief over her tear-stained, repentant face, is a touch of genius, as sure as was that in *Vanity Fair*, when Becky admires her husband whose blow at Lord Steyne shatters all her schemes.

It is amazing how, in the dozen years which elapsed between the writing of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*, Dickens had improved not only in his style, but in his conception of life. The earlier book is vitiated by a kind of theatricality of treatment which gives it a stilted and unreal air—far more unreal even than anything in the yet earlier *Oliver Twist*. It is like one of the old Adelphi dramas; even more, perhaps, like those transpontine entertainments which used to delight the Surrey side of the river. It is as mechanical as the drawings with which Phiz illustrated it. This is not to say that it does not contain great touches of permanent value: the Crummles troupe and the Kenwigses and, above all, Mrs Nickleby. But what a change comes over the scene



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in *David Copperfield*. One might, even to-day, meet any of the characters in that book ; and the underlying *motifs* are as old (or as young) as life itself. I can imagine coming across David, even in these sophisticated days, fresh at Charing Cross from the country, or Steerforth sauntering out of the Golden Cross, or Traddles ruffling his hair at Pentonville ; but I should as soon expect to meet Nicholas Nickleby or Mr Mantalini in the Strand or Wigmore Street as I should a megalosauros ; and if Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Frederick Verisopht (their names are quite sufficient) appeared, even as stuffed images in a museum, one would regard them as caricatures of nothing on earth so much as wild men from a Richardson's show in Bartholomew Fair.

All this time, however, David is waiting at Blunderstone or Yarmouth, or at Salem House, Blackheath, to begin his sad noviciate in London. As Blackheath may properly be termed a portion of London, it is here that the boy makes his first acquaintance with the air, if not the sights, of the metropolis. "What an amazing place London was when I saw it in the distance," he says. "We approached it by degrees and got, in due time, to the inn in the Whitechapel district, for which we were bound. I forget whether it was the Blue Bull, or the Blue Boar ; but I know it was the Blue something, and that its likeness was painted up on the back of the coach." The inn the coach stopped at was the Blue Boar, whose yard is shown as Boar Yard, *tout court*, by Horwood (1799), as being between 29 and 31 Whitechapel Road on the north side. It existed as a rendezvous for the east country coaches until the advent of railways, and it was from here, as we have seen, that Mr Pickwick set out for Ipswich.

Under the charge of Mr Mell, David goes by stage-coach to Blackheath, but before doing so visits the almshouses and hears Mr Mell discourse on his flute, to his old mother, who is one of the inmates. I am not sure which of the city almshouses then existing Dickens had in mind ; they were on the Surrey side of the river, and an inscription over the gate told the observant David that they were intended for

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twenty-five poor women. There were some almshouses in Soap Yard, Southwark, erected originally by Edward Alleyn, of Dulwich College fame, and they may have been those.

David's life at Mr Creakle's school, at home at Blunderstone, and during his visit to Peggotty's boat-house at Yarmouth, does not here concern us. Let us follow him again to London with Mr Quinion to be installed in the business of Murdstone & Grinby. He shall himself describe the place.

"Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the water-side. It was down in Blackfriars. Modern improvements have altered the place; but it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boat. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out and literally overrun with rats."

Here it was that Charles Dickens *alias* David Copperfield worked "from morning until night with common men and boys, a shabby child," examining and washing empty bottles.

Although Dickens places the warehouse in Blackfriars, it is now well known that it was identical with Warren's Blacking Factory, near Hungerford Bridge, off the Strand, at the lower end on the east side of Craven Street, opposite the White Swan tavern. Such drastic alterations have taken place in this locality, owing to the construction of the Embankment, completed in 1870, and the removal of Hungerford Market in 1860 to make way for Charing Cross Station, that the actual spot, No. 30 Hungerford Stairs, has long since been swept out of existence.

Here David remained until the business was transferred to No. 3 Chandos Street,<sup>1</sup> and he went with it—ever after, so poignant were the memories of the earlier durance, avoiding the street in which his many youthful, unhappy hours were

<sup>1</sup> Warren's business, or Lamert's, as it was then, where Dickens was himself employed, occupied these premises.

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passed. It was, however, due to this miserable noviciate that he (or Dickens, it is the same thing) obtained that extensive and peculiar knowledge of the intricacies of this part of London which stood him in such good stead in many of his novels. The by-streets of the Adelphi, the Dark Arches, and the life of the river wharves, had no mysteries for him, and his acquaintance with the taverns in the neighbourhood was that of an expert. One remembers how, a child, but with the air of a man, he ordered a glass of "the genuine stunning" at the public-house not far off. This was in Parliament Street, at the corner of the very short street (Derby Street) leading into Cannon Row. It was the Red Lion at No. 48, and in Tallis may be seen an elevation of the original building (it was reconstructed in 1899), in the street of which one side disappeared with the widening of Whitehall, although that portion of the thoroughfare still goes by the old name.

Then there were the two pudding-shops where the boy used to buy his saveloy and penny loaf; one near St Martin's Church; the other in the Strand. The latter I always think must have been at No. 23, where one Yeates had his "Ham and Tongue Warehouse," one door from the corner of what was Market Street, leading to Hungerford Market, and about midway between Villiers Street and Craven Street, or exactly in the middle of Charing Cross station yard. When he could go farther afield, David patronised the famous *à la mode* beef shop in Drury Lane; or when his finances were low would gaze into the shop in Fleet Street where the venison was displayed; or would wander into Covent Garden to make his mouth water by the contemplation of the pineapples.

He tells us, too, how fond he was of wandering about the Adelphi, "because it was a mysterious place, with those dark arches," and he adds that he emerged one evening from some of these arches "on a little public-house close to the river, with an open space before it, where some coal-heavers were dancing," and how he sat down to watch them. This little tavern was the Fox under the Hill, which stood at the



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bottom of Ivy Lane, a quaint ramshackle little place, as may be seen in the illustration of it reproduced in Mr Austin Brereton's *History of the Adelphi*. The Embankment improved it out of existence. Ivy Lane, or Ivy Bridge Lane, ran down to the river immediately east of the Adelphi, and nearly opposite Southampton Street, Strand. It is historic, for down it went James, Duke of York, when he escaped from London by boat, in 1648.

During this time David lodged with the Micawbers, in Windsor Terrace, City Road; doubtless Bayham Street (No. 147, formerly 16), where the Dickens family once lived. The house was on the right about half-way down the thoroughfare by St Luke's workhouse whence the single servant, "a orfling," came, as she informed David before he had been half-an-hour in the house.

"Under the impression that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not been as yet extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road—in short that you might lose yourself," exclaims Mr Micawber on being introduced to David, and concluding arrangements for his becoming an inmate of Windsor Terrace, "I shall be happy to call this evening, and install you in the knowledge of the nearest way." It was not long after this that Mr Micawber's affairs came to one of their periodical crises; and David, among other things, carried the few books—which Mr Micawber called his library—to a bookstall near by in the City Road "one part of which, near our house," says he, "was almost all bookstalls and bird shops." At length the crisis became so acute that Mr Micawber was carried away to the King's Bench Prison, in the Borough.

The King's Bench enters largely into the novels of Dickens, and already have we met with it in the pages of *Nicholas Nickleby*. On the occasion of David's first visit there, Mr Micawber was waiting for him within the gate and took him up to his room on the top storey but one, where he solemnly adjured him to take warning by his fate. On a later occasion



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David was introduced to the club in the prison, at which Mr Micawber was a great authority, and where his famous "petition" was concocted. David had, in the meanwhile, in consequence of Mrs Micawber's resolve to share her husband's incarceration, taken a "quiet back garret with a sloping roof, commanding a pleasant prospect of a timber yard," in the vicinity of the King's Bench, in fact in Lant Street, and he walked daily to and fro between Southwark and Blackfriars, and lounged about at meal-times in the obscure streets of those districts.

The Micawbers, free at length from durance, took a lodging in the same house as David, and then started for Plymouth in high hopes of something turning up. This break-up of the old relations determined the boy to run away to his aunt—Betsey Trotwood—at Dover. His experiences on that memorable trip, especially the meeting with the long-legged young man with a very little empty donkey-cart, near the Obelisk,<sup>1</sup> in the Blackfriars Road, may be read in Chapters XII. and XIII.

The story now takes us away from London to Dover, where David is made acquainted with Mr Dick, and is frightened out of his wits by the visit of the Murdstones; and to Canterbury, where he goes to school at Dr Strong's, and comes to know the Wickfields, and Uriah Heep at whose "umble dwelling" Mr Micawber suddenly turns up. The last incident results in David learning of the Micawbers' failure to find sympathy at Plymouth and again being in lodgings in Pentonville. Subsequently the hero himself comes back to London on his way to visit the Peggottys, at Yarmouth, and is set down at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, "then a mouldy sort of establishment in a close neighbourhood."

The old Golden Cross, as may be seen from pictures of the period, faced the back of King Charles's statue, and stood

<sup>1</sup> This was erected in 1771, in honour of Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor of London. Two years later, as the result of a thunderstorm, the monument was badly cracked: as Mrs Thrale informed Doctor Johnson.

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where the Nelson Column is to-day ; it possessed a sign overhanging the road and fixed to a framework on the pavement. It was the chief coaching inn of the West End. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it had a Gothic frontage, and an almost ecclesiastical air due to reconstructions undertaken in 1811.

During the Strand improvements of 1827, the old house was demolished and a new one erected from the designs of Tite. There was a large archway, giving access to the yard from the Strand, referred to by the author (supposed to be Maginn) of the *Lamentation over the Golden Cross*, and mentioned by David, who speaks of his dreams being disturbed by the “early morning coaches rumbling out of the archway underneath his bedroom.” It will be remembered that when David runs across Steerforth, also staying here, he is promptly transferred, through his friend’s instrumentality, from Room No. 44—“a little loft over a stable”—to a more commodious chamber, No. 72 ; with an immense four-post bedstead in it, which was “quite a little landed estate.”<sup>1</sup>

When David accompanies Steerforth to Highgate to see the latter’s mother, they go, in all probability, to Church House in South Grove, “an old brick house on the summit of the hill,” which is generally regarded as the residence in question. Before doing so, however, the two friends see something of the sights of London, visiting in a hackney-chariot a Panorama (doubtless that of Burford in the middle of Leicester Square) and the British Museum whose great portico was yet to be added, it not being set up till 1847.

[When the suggestion is made that David should become a proctor, he asks Steerforth what such a personage may be. “Why, I can tell you best what he is by telling you what Doctors’ Commons is. It’s a little out-of-the-way place, where they administer what is called ecclesiastical law, and play all kinds of tricks with obsolete old monsters of acts of

<sup>1</sup> The Covent Garden Theatre, where David saw *Julius Cæsar* on the first night of his stay, was the predecessor of the present house, burnt down in 1856.

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Parliament." The result is that David goes, accompanied by his aunt, who had taken lodgings at "a kind of private hotel," in Lincoln's Inn Fields, to interview Messrs Spenlow and Jorkins. On their way they stop at a toy-shop in Fleet Street to see the giants of St Dunstan's strike upon the bells. The shop was Harrison's, at No. 31 Fleet Street, two doors west of Falcon Court. The famous clock was removed when the new St Dunstan's was built in 1833, and was bought by the Marquis of Hertford who set it up at his villa in Regent's Park, where it may still be seen. The clock was an unfailing attraction for country visitors, and even so hardened a Londoner as Charles Lamb shed tears when the old landmark went. It was on this occasion that Betsey Trotwood was accosted by the man whom David took to be a sturdy beggar, but who was really his aunt's husband.]

[ "Doctors' Commons was approached by a little low archway. Before we had taken many paces down the street beyond it, the noise of the city seemed to melt, as if by magic, into a softened distance. A few dull courts and narrow ways brought us to the sky-lighted offices of Spenlow and Jorkins."

Doctors' Commons was situated in St Bennet's Hill, St Paul's Churchyard, and consisted of all sorts of courts, whose business was subsequently divided among various divisions of the Law Courts and Somerset House. It was dissolved, in consequence of the remodelling of the Law Courts, in 1861, although the actual building was not demolished till some six years later.]

While engaged in learning the intricacies of the law here, under the ægis of Mr Spenlow, lightened by visits to that gentleman's residence at Norwood, David took lodgings at Mrs Crupp's, in Buckingham Street, Strand. The house was that in which Dickens had himself lived in 1834. It was at the corner overlooking the river, No. 15,<sup>1</sup> and when Peter

<sup>1</sup> At No. 14, opposite, Pepys, Harley, Earl of Oxford, Etty and Clarkson-Stanfield, had all lived, as a tablet informs us. There is a good photo of No. 15 in *The Dickensian*, vol. ii.



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the Great was in England in 1698, he is said to have occupied this very residence. The late Mr Kitton had no doubt that this was where Mrs Crupp let lodgings, on the top floor, consisting of "a little half-blind entry where you could see hardly anything, a little stone-blind pantry where you could see nothing at all, a sitting-room, and a bedroom," as Dickens describes it.

Here David gave his first dinner (he had bought the dessert in Covent Garden and had his wine from a retail wine-merchant's in the vicinity), and indulged in his first dissipation; going miserably the next morning to see Agnes, in Ely Place, Holborn, where she was then staying with her father's agent, Mr Waterbrook.

The visits to Mr Spenlow's place result, as we all know, in David falling hopelessly in love with Dora, with the further result of his haunting the Norwood Road, pervading the parks, and even going to the Bazaar (which I imagine to have been that at 58 Baker Street or perhaps that in Soho Square, which Mr Trotter had inaugurated in 1815), on the chance of seeing her. Probably, too, with a view to having someone to whom he might impart his feelings, David bethinks himself of Traddles, and forthwith goes off to visit him "in a little street near the Veterinary College, at Camden Town. . . . I found that the street was not as desirable a one as I could have wished it to be, for the sake of Traddles. The inhabitants appeared to have a propensity to throw any little trifles they were not in want of, into the road." The house was evidently a small one, for we are told that it was only one storey high above the ground floor; and, wonder of wonders, the landlord proved to be none other than Wilkins Micawber, from whose florid discourse we learn that "a washerwoman who exposes hard-bake for sale in her parlour window" dwelt next door, and a Bow Street officer opposite. However, Mr Micawber, who owned to finding Camden Town inconvenient, told David and Traddles, on a subsequent occasion, that in the event of anything turning up, he had decided to move, mentioning "a terrace at the western end



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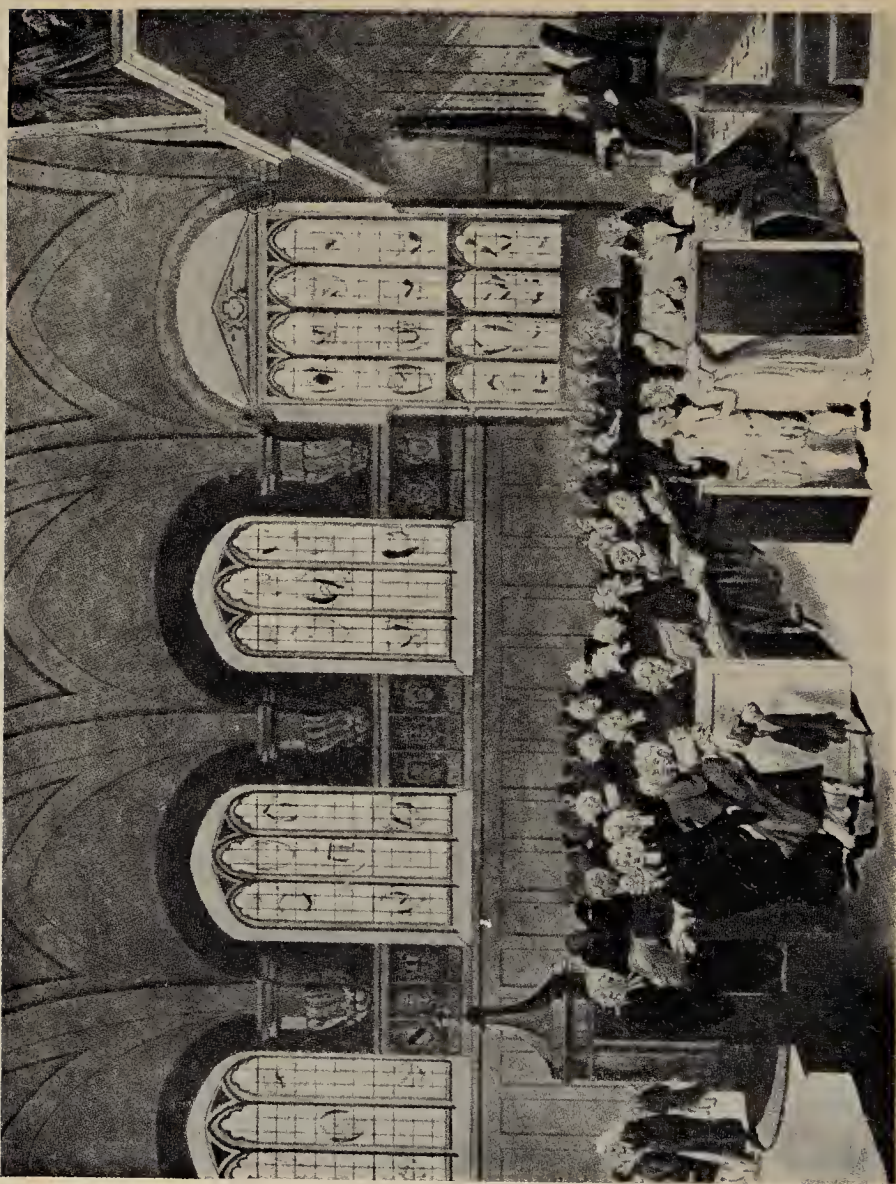
of Oxford Street, fronting Hyde Park, on which he had always had his eye"—probably Connaught Place or Hyde Park Place !

There is the less necessity to follow the fortunes of David and his friends in London or elsewhere, because this wonderful book in which they are recorded cannot but be fresh in the memory of all readers. *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* may leave more or less hazy impressions, but *David Copperfield* is one of those works that fix their incidents so securely on the mind's retina that they become indelible—impervious to the influence of time or the conflicting impressions of other books. Thus David visited again by Steerforth ; David on his journey to Yarmouth ; the death of Barkis ; even the flight of Little Em'ly, need not detain us from simply recording the Londoniana of the novel.

How the hero returns with Mr Peggotty to the metropolis, at the beginning of that sacred quest for the lost girl, and is present at the interview between the seducer's mother and the uncle of the victim, is told in Chapter XXXII., where we learn that David secured a lodging for Peggotty "of a very clean and cheap description, over a chandler's shop," only two streets removed from Buckingham Street—in fact, down the little Market Street, in Hungerford Market, then situated between Villiers and Craven Streets. Mrs Barkis (*née* Peggotty), now a widow, accompanied David and her brother to London, when the late Barkis's will was proved for her by David, and she saw Mr Spenlow in his Proctorial gown, and was duly impressed. After this business was transacted, and certain necessary forms gone through at the Bank of England, David and his old nurse varied these proceedings by going to some perspiring Wax-works in Fleet Street ; by visiting Miss Linwood's Exhibition ; by inspecting the Tower ; and by ascending to the top of St Paul's.

The last two forms of entertainment are still within our reach ; the former two are with yesterday's seven thousand years. The wax-works which looked so hot were those of





THE COURT OF CHANCERY, LINCOLN'S INN HALL  
AFTER ROWLANDSON AND PUGIN



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the famous Mrs Salmon ; not at No. 17 Fleet Street (already an historic house), whither they had been removed from their earlier home at No. 189, on the north side of the thoroughfare ; but at the corner of Water Lane, where a certain James Templeman continued to exhibit them at twopence or threepence a head entrance. Miss Linwood's exhibition of needlework was either in the Hanover Square Rooms or in its later home, at Savile House, in Leicester Square.<sup>1</sup>

In that "blissful" Chapter XXXIII. we can follow David buying a bouquet in Covent Garden for Dora and riding out to Norwood, *en route* for the picnic at which Red Whisker proved a veritable rag to our love-lorn bull, and Miss Mills, from the stores of her past (she was slightly older than Dora), reconciled the temporarily estranged couple, the quarrels of lovers, as in the old saying, really proving the rebirth of love—and the pair become engaged.

At this juncture appears Miss Betsey Trotwood, accompanied by Mr Dick, having, as she says, lost all her property, and installs herself at 15 Buckingham Street. There was room there for his aunt, but David could not accommodate Mr Dick as well, and he therefore goes round to the chandler's shop (where Mr Peggotty had but recently lodged), and engages an apartment there. This shop was in Hungerford Market, as we have seen, and, says Dickens, "Hungerford Market being a very different place in those days, there was a low wooden colonnade before the door which pleased Mr Dick mightily." Poor David was in anything but a happy state, however ; and to freshen his wits a little, the next morning he had a cold plunge in the old Roman bath in the Strand, and then went for a long self-communing walk to Hampstead. This famous old bath is situated in Strand Lane, and may still be seen *in situ*. It is the one relic of those

<sup>1</sup> It is all a question of what exact date we are to assign to *David Copperfield*. If his life is coterminous with that of the author, it is probably the former. By the way, the famous Chancery suit of Page v. Linwood, which lasted forty years, may have given Dickens a hint for his attacks on the law's delay, in *Bleak House*.



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early times remaining in this neighbourhood, but, such is the power of genius, it is probable that the fact of David Copperfield (or Charles Dickens) having bathed in it, gives it its supreme interest in our eyes, from which "the Romans, Mr Feeder" are inconveniently distant. The spring that supplies this bath is supposed to be the original Holy Well which gave its name to the Holywell Street of our earlier years.

Highgate, where Mrs Steerforth lived, was also the later abode of Dr Strong, whose cottage was, however, on the opposite side of the little town from Mrs Steerforth's residence. David going to see the Doctor (in Chapter XXXVI.), and speaking of trying to find his house, remarks that "the church with the slender spire, that stands on the top of the hill now, was not there then . . . an old red-brick mansion, used as a school, was in its place; and a fine old house it must have been to go to school at, as I recollect it." This church is St Michael's, erected from Vulliamy's designs, and consecrated in 1832, on the site of the old Mansion House, which had been built by Sir William Ashurst, Lord Mayor of London in 1694. It is an ugly sham-Gothic structure, but its spire has a good effect as a landmark. I like to think that Dr Strong's residence was Ivy Cottage, where Charles Mathews, a friend of Dickens, once lived.<sup>1</sup>

Traddles was now in a new environment, having removed to "a lodging up behind the parapet of a house in Castle Street, Holborn." Castle Street, joining Holborn with Cursitor Street, and out of which ran Took's Court, is now represented by Furnival Street. It was more properly known as Castle Yard, probably from the yard of the ancient Castle Inn, on which it was formed. Great people, Lord Arundel and Lady Davenant among them, once lived here; but in Traddles's time it had descended from its high estate, in common with so much in its interesting neighbourhood.

Mr Micawber, too, had again changed his venue, and

<sup>1</sup> There is a view of the cottage, with a ground plan, given in Smith's *Historical and Literary Curiosities*.

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under the name of Mortimer was occupying lodgings near the top of the Gray's Inn Road, from which he wrote the letter to David telling him that he was about to bid adieu to the modern Babylon and establish himself "in one of the provincial towns of our favoured island—" namely, although it was not in Mr Micawber's nature to state the fact directly, Canterbury—with what results we all know.

Meanwhile David and his aunt and Mr Dick formed a sort of Parliament in Buckingham Street, to which Traddles came to pose as Mr Fox, Mr Pitt, Mr Sheridan or Mr Burke, and David took the speeches down in the shorthand he was so assiduously learning. About this time occurred that terrifying interview with Mr Spenlow in "a certain coffee-house, which, in those days, had a door opening into the Commons, just within the little archway in St Paul's churchyard." This was no doubt the St Paul's Coffee House, kept by Harvey & Son; the little archway mentioned by Dickens being Dean's Court under No. 5 St Paul's Churchyard.

It is a considerable way from St Paul's Churchyard to St Martin's Lane, but it was longer from Highgate, one wintry night, when David, on his way from Dr Strong's to Buckingham Street, passed through it, as the shortest cut, and on the steps of St Martin's Church found Mr Peggotty, who, in one of the empty public rooms of the Golden Cross, recounts his experiences during the quest after Little Em'ly. "In those days there was a side-entrance to the stable-yard of the Golden Cross . . . nearly opposite to where we stood. I pointed out the gateway, put my arm through his, and we went across." Phiz's well-known illustration shows the kind of room in which the two sat; while Martha listened outside. All this part has been materially altered since those days by the formation of Trafalgar Square, which wiped out of existence the King's Mews, the Golden Cross and the adjacent buildings. Then, St Martin's Lane extended, a narrow thoroughfare, right down to the Strand, immediately opposite Northumberland House (where Northumberland Avenue runs to-day), and the little court referred to, at the

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back of the Golden Cross, giving access to its large yard, is shown in Horwood's plan as being between what were Nos. 140 and 141 St Martin's Lane. Another interview, this time between David (Traddles as *amicus curiæ*) and Dora's aunts at Putney, brings us to David's marriage with Dora, and the preparations for it, including the removal from Buckingham Street to a cottage on the Highgate Road, which was to be their home; Betsey Trotwood intending to remove to "a still more tiny cottage close at hand." One would like to know the name of the church at which the ceremony took place (with Mr Dick in great form, and David's aunt in lavender silk and a white bonnet); but this we are not told. Probably it was at Putney, but it would be hard to find there such an interior as that depicted by Phiz, full of ancient monuments, and, apparently, Mr Dombey acting as clerk. The great and perennial servant question (among many vicissitudes of housekeeping) looms large in the following pages, and comprised many weird and wonderful examples of "helps," including Mrs Kidgerbury—the oldest inhabitant of Kentish Town, and the young person who went to Greenwich Fair in one of Dora's bonnets. David was attending the House of Commons to report the debates (as Dickens himself did), and he was also writing a book, Dora holding the pens, "because she wanted to have something to do while Doady was so industrious."

— All this time Peggotty is searching for his missing Em'ly, and one night he and David, having come through Temple Bar into the city, were not far from Blackfriars Bridge (the former structure, replaced by the present one in 1869), when they saw a figure flitting along on the other side of the street—none other in fact than Martha. They follow her a long way westward, until she turns into a dull dark street in Westminster, and finally come up with her "in the narrow water-side street by Millbank." "The neighbourhood was a dreary one at that time; as oppressive, sad, and solitary by night, as any about London. There were neither wharves nor houses on the melancholy waste of road near the great



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blank Prison. A sluggish ditch deposited its mud at the prison walls. Coarse grass and rank weeds straggled over all the marshy land in the vicinity. In one part, carcasses of houses, inauspiciously begun and never finished, rotted away. In another the ground was cumbered with rusty iron monsters of steam-boilers, wheels, cranks, pipes, furnaces, paddles, anchors, diving-bells, windmill sails, and I know not what strange objects, accumulated by some speculator, and grovelling in the dust, underneath which—having sunk into the soil of their own weight in wet weather—they had the appearance of vainly trying to hide themselves.”

Those who know this part of the city, to-day, with the Tate Gallery classically enshrined on the site of the hideous Penitentiary, and the Embankment flanked by massive buildings, will find it hard to realise what it was when Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*; and his description is one of those word-pictures which do so much to reconstruct for us the appearance of past landmarks, and make his novels so valuable even if only regarded as topographical documents.

It is Martha,<sup>1</sup> saved from the river, who is destined to lead to the discovery of Little Em'ly, and in Chapter L. we learn how she guides David to the house in “one of the sombre streets,” where the houses were once fair dwellings, near Golden Square, but which had become wretched tenements full of vice and squalor. In one of these Little Em'ly falls into the arms of her uncle. As I have said before, I know no such touch of genius in any work of fiction as that which tells how Peggotty, stooping to kiss her face—“oh, how tenderly,” *draws a handkerchief before it*, and carries her, unconscious, down the stairs.

Soon after this, Mr Micawber makes his startling denunciation of Heep, at Canterbury, and confidence is once more restored between him and his Emma; and with the

<sup>1</sup> Not only Martha but also Miss Mowcher, was for much in the tracking of Little Em'ly, and I may here mention that the latter lady's prototype is said to have been a Mrs Seymour King, a chiropodist, living at 6 York Gate, Regent's Park.



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death of Dora, and David's going abroad, the book draws towards its close. The vacating of the cottage at Highgate on the hero's return to England, and his temporary lodging in rooms in Covent Garden, precede the tremendous description of the storm off Yarmouth in which Steerforth loses his life ; and the subsequent departure of the Micawbers for the New World. Preparatory to this, the family put up "in a little, dirty, tumble-down public-house, which in those days was close to the stairs, and whose protruding wooden rooms overhung the river," close to Hungerford Stairs. This was the White Swan,<sup>1</sup> at the south-west corner of Craven Street, opposite the spot where Dickens places the blacking warehouse at which David worked as a boy. Thence the Micawbers took boat for Gravesend, probably helping to swell that number of nearly a million steamboat passengers who passed through Hungerford Market, on their way to the Stairs, in 1843.<sup>2</sup>

David, who went to see them and the Peggottys, who accompanied them, off, speaks of the interior of the ship at Gravesend as resembling a canvas by Ostade, and he gives us a word-picture of the scene, Dutch-like in its minuteness and comprehensive survey. On his own return to England after his foreign sojourn, he lands in London on a wintry autumn evening, and we can accompany him as he walked from the Custom House (erected in 1814-1817 as a successor to Wren's earlier building destroyed by fire in 1715) to the Monument before he found a coach.

"As I looked out of the coach-window," he writes, "and observed that an old house on Fish Street Hill, which had stood untouched by painter, carpenter, or bricklayer, for a century, had been pulled down in my absence ; and that a neighbouring street, of time-honoured insalubrity and inconvenience, was being drained and widened ; I half expected to find St Paul's Cathedral looking older."

<sup>1</sup> There used to be another "White Swan" at No. 332 Strand.

<sup>2</sup> See *Descriptive Particulars of Hungerford Suspension Bridge*, published in 1845.

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David found other changes. His aunt was re-established at Dover ; Traddles had begun to get some practice at the bar, and had chambers in Gray's Inn, at No. 2 Holborn Court, as his friend learns from the waiter at the Gray's Inn Coffee House at which he put up, the same " Court " in which Ritson the antiquary had his chambers at No. 8 ; the Gray's Inn about which Lamb gossips so characteristically, but which Dickens, in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, found " one of the most depressing institutions in brick and mortar known to the children of men." The Gray's Inn Coffee House occupied Nos. 19 to 23 High Holborn, beneath No. 22, which formed the entrance to Gray's Inn itself. It was kept in 1838 by Hilton, and its bay windows were an attractive and picturesque feature of the thoroughfare. Going to No. 2 Holborn Court, after a hasty dinner at the coffee-house, David hurries up a crazy old staircase, feebly lighted, and finds Traddles married and installed not only with his wife, but with his wife's sisters, and almost catches the whole lot playing at Puss in the Corner !

With the visit to the penitents, Littimer and Heep, in their cells, probably at Millbank ; with Traddles at his new chambers in the Temple, and his large house, where however he still keeps his papers in his dressing-room, and his boots with his papers ; with David happily married to Agnes in *his* house (let us call it No. 1 Devonshire Terrace<sup>1</sup>), we close the London associations of Dickens's masterpiece.

<sup>1</sup> Dickens's London home from 1839 to 1851.

## XI

### BLEAK HOUSE (1852-1853)

THE London of *Bleak House* is largely atmospheric—that is to say that in its pages we have rather a general sense of metropolitan places than that topographical exactness concerning them which is to be found in some of Dickens's other books. But so wonderfully realistic is the way in which the city is made to pervade the work, that it seems to stand out from the novels, in a general way, as containing a more life-like delineation of London than almost any of them. Chancery Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the many Inns of Court and little streets in the vicinity, bulk so largely in the story, that just as *Pickwick* may be described as a picture of convivial London, and *Our Mutual Friend* as a picture of river-side London; so *Bleak House* stands as the last word on the legal London of its period. It possesses another outstanding characteristic. It is one of the few of Dickens's books which contain anything resembling a plot. That plot may be over-involved, as Mr Brimley, one of its earliest critics, an adverse one, thought; but there it is—it *has* a plot, and may thus, in a way, be regarded as the forerunner of *Our Mutual Friend* and *Great Expectations*.

In many respects it is one of its writer's most interesting productions; and if, to-day, one finds oneself walking about London on a specially murky day, or bewildered in one of London's own particular fogs, it is *Bleak House* one conjures up, and that remarkable word-picture with which the book opens. Well known as the passage is, I venture to give it here, because it is the keynote of the novel, and because it paints for us something most of us have experienced—always a pleasant thing to find in a work of fiction.

“London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord

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Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a *Megalosauros*, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest. Fog everywhere. . . . Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds. Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.”<sup>1</sup>

Hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, on such a day sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery, and the case, a perennial one, before him, is that of *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*. This hall was that which dated from 1506, but which had been altered in various years, and lengthened so late as 1819, when the old oak roof was ruthlessly removed and a stucco ceiling substituted<sup>1</sup>; but the space where the lantern or louver was, was retained, for we are told that the Chancellor looked up into it, but found no

<sup>1</sup> In Heckthorn's *Lincoln's Inn Fields* is an illustration of the hall, as it must have appeared to Miss Flite and “the man from Shropshire.”



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light even there. For Jarndyce and Jarndyce is as productive of darkness as the fog without, and had been since old Tom Jarndyce blew his brains out in despair at a coffee-house in Chancery Lane ; its baneful influence being felt by everyone concerned, even down to the copying clerk in the neighbouring Six Clerks' Office, then in Stone Buildings.

It is a long cry from the Court of Chancery to the realms of fashion where Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock reside, but the two are, as Dickens says, alike in this : they are both things of precedent and usage. The street in which the Dedlock mansion was situated has never been actually traced ; all we are told is that it was " a dull street under the best conditions, where the two long rows of houses stare at each other with that severity, that half-a-dozen of its greatest mansions seem to have been slowly stared into stone, rather than originally built in that material. . . . Complicated garnish of iron-work entwines itself over the flights of steps ; and from these petrified bowers, extinguishers for obsolete flambeaux gasp at the upstart gas. Here and there a weak little iron hoop retains its place among the rusty foliage, sacred to the memory of departed oil." It was thus obviously a street of Georgian houses ; such a street as may be found in the older parts of Mayfair, or in the neighbourhood of Portman Square. But different as it is in externals from the legal part of the city, it yet possesses the same attributes noted by Dickens, and Mr Tulkinghorn is as much at home in its drawing-rooms as he is in his chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, or in the more squalid purlieus of Cook's Court.

It is at Windsor, where she had been living with her godmother, that Esther is visited, after the death of that guardian, by Mr Kenge of Kenge & Carboy, solicitors, of Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, who arranges for her to go to school at Greenleaf, near Reading, under the care of Miss Donny. Six years later she receives a letter from the same firm informing her that she is " to be forwarded " (like a parcel) to the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly (which we have visited

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with Mr Pickwick), there to be met by one of their clerks—Mr Guppy, in fact. Again a fog envelops the scene—a London particular, as Mr Guppy is careful to inform his charge, as she is driven under an old gateway through a silent square until the chariot stops “at an odd nook in a corner, where there was an entrance up a steep, broad flight of stairs, like an entrance to a church.” There really was a churchyard, outside under some cloisters, for Esther tells how she “could see the gravestones from the staircase window.” These offices were at 13 Old Square in the north-west corner, since rebuilt, but where an exterior flight of steps still exists. The old gateway beneath which Esther drove was, of course, that forming the Chancery Lane entrance to Lincoln’s Inn, erected by Sir Thomas Lovell, in 1518, and still one of the most picturesque buildings in London.<sup>1</sup>

A little way up Chancery Lane, on the opposite side of the road, is that picturesque and ancient (it is mentioned by Stow) little by-way known as Quality Court. It is pleasant to find that Dickens did not overlook it, for he makes Mr Jarndyce refer to it as the place where one of the authorities who will have something to say as to Richard’s choice of a profession—he being a ward in Chancery—has his offices :

“Master Somebody—a sort of ridiculous sexton, digging graves for the merits of causes in a back room in Quality Court, Chancery Lane.”

It was after the interview with the Chancellor, accompanied by Richard Carstone and Ada Clare, that, under the colonnade which then flanked the old court, Esther first meets Miss Flite. The whole party is subsequently convoyed by Mr Guppy to Mrs Jellyby’s, where it was arranged that its members should pass the night. This was “round in Thavies Inn . . . we just twist up Chancery Lane, and cut along Holborn, and there we are in four minutes’ time, as near as a toucher,” explains Mr Guppy.

<sup>1</sup> Before this was formed, the entrance to Lincoln’s Inn was from Holborn.

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Thavies Inn was on the south side of Holborn between Bartlett's Buildings and St Andrew's Church, and was entered by an archway under No. 56 Holborn Hill, then occupied as a draper's, by Messrs J. Watson & Co.<sup>1</sup> The archway mentioned gave on to "a narrow street of high houses, like an oblong cistern," and on one of these a brass-plate, inscribed "Jellyby,"<sup>2</sup> indicated that the party had reached its destination. The construction of Holborn Viaduct and Circus, and the consequent raising of the roadway level (leaving St Andrew's in a ditch, as it were), as well as the demolition of Thavies Inn, has so altered all this neighbourhood, that we can only follow Dickens in imagination, and his description is almost as historical now as anything Stow or Strype ever wrote.

The interior of the Jellyby abode we all know through the same photographic medium—one hopes there were not many like it in London. The suggestion of Caddy Jellyby, the next morning, that they should all go for a walk, results in the party making the acquaintance of Miss Flite's lodging at the top of the house ("in a pretty large room from which she had a glimpse of Lincoln's Inn Hall") of which Krook's shop occupied the ground floor. This is said to have been in Chichester Rents,<sup>3</sup> by the wall of Lincoln's Inn, through a little side gate from its precincts, in a narrow back street. Chichester Rents runs from Star Yard to Chancery Lane, and I am, therefore, inclined to put Krook's shop in Star Yard itself, which was far more of a back street (it ran parallel between Lincoln's Inn Wall and Chancery Lane) than Chichester Rents.<sup>4</sup>

The next day they all "leave the wonderful city, through

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to find that, in 1838, No. 80 Holborn Hill was occupied by R. Diekens (so spelt in Tallis's view, although in the letter-press it is given as "Diekins").

<sup>2</sup> At a later period the Jellybys went to lodgings in Hatton Garden, where the diamond merchants are to-day and some legal practitioners.

<sup>3</sup> So called from Ralph, Bishop of Chichester.

<sup>4</sup> I do not forget that Mr Allbut favours No. 3 Bishop's Court; but I reject this for the same reason as I do Chichester Rents.



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the sunshine and fresh air, wondering more and more at the extent of the streets, the brilliancy of the shops, the great traffic, and the crowds of people," on their way to Bleak House. Even in the recesses of Hertfordshire, a breath of London reaches them, in the person of Coavinses' representative, come thither, in quest of Harold Skimpole, from his haunt in Cursitor Street ; and in that of Mr Guppy who makes his proposal to Esther, and gives her his address (in case she might think better of her refusal) at 87 Penton Place, "or, if removed, or dead, care of Mrs Guppy, 302 Old Street Road." The former "considered," as Mr Guppy remarks, "one of the 'ealthiest outlets," is on the south of the Pentonville Road, near Holford Square ; the latter, now Old Street, *tout court*, runs from Mr Pickwick's Goswell Road to Curtain Road and Shoreditch.

With Chapter X. we return to the purlieus of the Law, and find ourselves "on the eastern borders of Chancery Lane, that is to say, more particularly in Cook's Court, Cursitor Street," where Mr Snagsby, Law Stationer, pursues his lawful calling, under the name of Peffer & Snagsby, although Peffer has been recumbent for a quarter of a century in the churchyard of St Andrew's, Holborn. Cook's Court is only another name for Took's Court. No. 22 has been suggested as the actual place, once the office of *The Athenæum*, which had "a view of Cook's Court at one end (not to mention a squint into Cursitor Street), and of Coavinses' the sheriff officers' backyard at the other." The bottle-shaped Court is half-way up Cursitor Street on the left from Chancery Lane, and branches round into Furnival Street, formerly Castle Street.

The interior of Mr Snagsby's dwelling (which, by the way, was more or less recently occupied by Mr Sprules, also a Law Stationer) contains the staircase up and down which Mrs Snagsby was wont to flit on her suspicious errands ; and the drawing-room, on the first floor front, where Mr Chadband held forth on "the human boy," and consumed buttered muffins, in the intervals of the discourse. To this



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abode comes, on a certain evening, Mr Tulkinghorn from his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, one of the most famous and interesting Dickensian landmarks existing. It is No. 58, and was in Dickens's time the residence of John Forster, in whose room the writer read *The Chimes* to a select literary and artistic circle, on 2nd December 1844. It is described in *Bleak House* as "formerly a house of state . . . let off in sets of chambers now ; and in those shrunk fragments of its greatness, lawyers lie like maggots in nuts. But its roomy staircases, passages, and antechambers still remain ; and even its painted ceilings, where Allegory, in Roman helmet and celestial linen, sprawls among balustrades and pillars, flowers, clouds, and big-legged boys."<sup>1</sup>

The place may be seen substantially as it was in Mr Tulkinghorn's time, when probably Spencer Perceval lived next door but one, at No. 60, which with No. 59 had in earlier days formed a single mansion, known as Lindsey Hosue.

Mr Tulkinghorn's real object in calling on Snagsby is, as everyone knows, to find out the address of the mysterious "Nemo," the copyist of legal documents, really the Captain Hawdon of Lady Dedlock's past. How he finds him dead, in the miserable room on the second floor over Krook's shop ; how he calls on Miss Flite for help, and Mr Snagsby arrives hastily ; and how the inquest is held at the Sol's Arms, these incidents occupy Chapters X. and XI. The account of the inquest and the excited state into which the neighbourhood is thrown, and of the body being subsequently carried away to "a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene" with Jo making its dreary archway clean, and Guster, at Mr Snagsby's, murdering sleep by going out of one fit into twenty, forms a piece of descriptive writing of the first order. To our purpose, here, however, it is merely to state that the Sol's Arms had its actual counterpart in the Old Ship tavern, at the corner of Chichester Rents and Star Yard. There was a real Sol's Arms at 65 Hampstead Road, at the corner of

<sup>1</sup> Since those days whitewash has successfully clouded over the work, which may well have been one of Thornhill's.

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Charles Street, formerly known as Sol's Row<sup>1</sup>; and it is suggested that Dickens transferred the name and character of the tavern to Star Yard.

The burial-ground where "Nemo" was interred, "with houses looking on it on every side, save where a reeking little tunnel of a court gives access to the iron gates," was that attached to the Church of Clements Dane.<sup>2</sup> It was situated in Portugal Street, close by the site occupied by King's College Hospital, a neighbourhood which, through successive changes and the coming of the Law Courts, retains little of the appearance it presented in Dickens's day. The St Clement's burial-ground fully bore out the writer's indictment of being pestiferous and insanitary; and when an agitation for its improvement took place, Dickens showed special interest in the matter.

From lodgings, over an upholsterer's shop, near Oxford Street, whither they had come up from Hertfordshire, Mr Jarndyce and his wards and Esther, made the rounds of the principal theatres (there were fewer then than now!), and Richard arranges to go as a budding doctor, to Mr Bayham Badger's, at Chelsea—although whereabouts in Chelsea the worthy surgeon's house was situated, it is impossible to say. However the party found it when they were invited to dine there and were as much fed up with recollections of Mrs Bayham Badger's former husbands, Captain Swosser and Professor Dingo, as with the fare placed before them. But we now make the acquaintance of a far more decorative person than Mr Bayham Badger—notably the immortal Turveydrop, being introduced to that great man and his son by Caddy Jellyby. The Dancing Academy which Turveydrop junior runs and which runs Turveydrop senior, was situated "in a sufficiently dingy house at the corner of

<sup>1</sup> The name is derived from the Sol's Society, of a masonic character, whose meetings were held here.

<sup>2</sup> I am bound to say that the burial-ground attached to St Mary-le-Strand, in Russell Court, where York Street, Covent Garden, is now, has been pointed out as the identical place.

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an archway," at No. 26 Newman Street, Oxford Street, and shared the building with a drawing-master, a coal-merchant, and a lithographic artist. Newman Street was for long the street of artists. Banks and Bacon, the sculptors, Benjamin West and Stothard and James Heath, all lived in it; while Charles Kemble had occupied the house next door (No. 27) to that which sheltered the pampered form of "Gentleman" Turveydrop, who took his daily airing in the Park; observed how his countrymen had "degenerated, Sir"; and then went off to partake of his evening meal at the French house in the Opera Colonnade—the old opera-house, that is, in the Haymarket where the Carlton Hotel is now, and there is no more a colonnade than there is in Regent Street.

Two chapters in *Bleak House* bear actual London titles: one of these is Chapter XV., which is headed "Bell Yard." We know Bell Yard as a turning from Fleet Street by the side of the Law Courts which immediately abuts on its western side. In pre-Law Court days, however, it was an actual street, though a narrow one, and narrower at its Fleet Street end than farther up. Not only have the railings of the Law Courts altered entirely one side of it; but on the other the buildings are almost wholly new, and you have to look at some of the old houses happily still remaining in Carey Street, at its northern end, to realise something of what was its former appearance. Not so historically interesting as Shire Lane, with its memories of the Kit-Kat Club, a few yards to the west, it still possessed memories, chiefly ecclesiastical, for it ran through property that had, before the Dissolution, belonged to the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, and abutted, in those days, on the open ground known as Fickett's Fields. For us, however, its chief interest lies in the fact that there lived Neckett (the representative of Coavinses), and there he died, leaving his young family, whom Esther and Mr Skimpole go to visit, after having found out their whereabouts from the boy at what Skimpole calls Coavinses' Castle, in Cursitor Street. The address given is "Bell Yard, Chandler's shop, left-hand side, name of



Blinder.” There they (having been joined by Mr Jarndyce) not only find the little family, but meet Gridley, “the man from Shropshire,” who tells his miserable story of the law’s delays.

The following chapter is headed “Tom-all-Alone’s,” and introduces us to that wretched rookery where Jo exists perilously. “Jo lives—that is to say, Jo has not yet died—in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone’s. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out as lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. . . . Twice, lately, there has been a crash and a cloud of dust, like the springing of a mine, in Tom-all-Alone’s; and, each time, a house has fallen. . . . The gaps remain, and there are not unpopular lodgings among the rubbish. . . . This desirable property is in Chancery, of course.” If Phiz made a careful drawing on the spot, then his illustration (farther on in the book, at Chapter XLVI.) is a valuable topographical document as showing exactly what the place thus described, looked like. What low quarter Dickens had in mind is not, however, quite clear. The church in the background should give a clue, and if, as has been suggested, it represents St Andrew’s, Holborn, the vicinity of Field Lane (which we have met with in *Oliver Twist*) may be the quarter. On the other hand Phiz (like the writer he illustrated) possibly mixed up his topography, and the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, where then so much squalor and misery congregated, may, with I think more likelihood, be the place. In any case it is to Jo, sweeping his crossing, that the mysterious lady comes and asks him to point out to her the grave of “Nemo”; which done she disappears, and Jo slinks home, with the piece of gold he has received in his mouth, to Tom-all-Alone’s.

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the *Rookeries of London*, see the work with this title, by Thomas Beames, 1850.



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Richard, as we know, did not find the medical profession a congenial one after all ; and so he gives it up for the Law (the will-o'-the-wisp of the Jarndyce suit beckoning him on), and he determines to read with Mr Kenge, lodgings being procured for him " in a quiet old house near Queen Square," Bloomsbury.

In the following chapter we get a vignette of London during the long vacation : " The Courts are all shut up ; the public offices lie in a hot sleep ; Westminster Hall itself is a shady solitude where nightingales might sing and a tenderer class of suitors than is usually found there, walk. The Temple, Chancery Lane, Serjeants' Inn, and Lincoln's Inn even unto the Fields, are like tidal harbours at low water ; where stranded proceedings, offices at anchor, idle clerks lounging on lop-sided stools that will not recover their perpendicular until the current of Term sets in, lie high and dry upon the ooze of the long vacation. Outer doors of chambers are shut up by the score, messages and parcels are to be left at the Porter's Lodge by the bushel. A crop of grass would grow in the chinks of the stone pavement outside Lincoln's Inn Hall, but that the ticket-porters, who have nothing to do beyond sitting in the shade there, with their white aprons over their heads to keep the flies off, grub it up and eat it thoughtfully."

During these sultry summer days Mr Krook's court is so hot that people turn their houses inside out, and sit on chairs on the pavement ; Mr Snagsby, in *his* court, feels the influence, what time Guster is preparing the little drawing-room for the reception of the Chadbands ; and Jo moves " on " to Blackfriars Bridge, where he finds a baking-stony corner, and contemplates the great cross on the dome of St Paul's, as he munches and gnaws his dinner.

One would like to be able to identify the eating-house, denominated the Slap-Bang, in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn, where Mr Guppy and Jobling and young Smallweed partake of their repast. In those days, wherever it was,

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it possessed those "boxes" in which the visitor could be more or less private ; a few of which still survive the ravages of time and the more gorgeous surroundings of "Corner Houses." One can see by Phiz's illustration the kind of thing that then generally obtained in such haunts. The result of this meal is that Jobling, otherwise Weevle, takes lodgings over Krook's, with what results the readers of *Bleak House* know.

From young Smallweed to young Smallweed's precious family is but a step ; but it is a long one from Lincoln's Inn Fields to their dwelling, "in a rather ill-favoured and ill-savoured neighbourhood, though one of its rising grounds bears the name of Mount Pleasant." Mount Pleasant, where the Post Office buildings are, can be reached by Rosebery Avenue, which connects its north-easterly portion with the Gray's Inn Road ; but a great exercise of the imagination is necessary to realise that it is either a mount or a pleasant one. To the Smallweed dwelling, which may have been in Phoenix Place, or for the matter of that in any of the more or less similar dreary small streets that then intersected this area, comes "Mr George" from his *habitat* in the west. His business (of a monetary nature) concluded, he clanks away with his military air still upon him, and coming to Waterloo Bridge, determines to relax himself at Astley's Theatre, in St George's Fields, in the Borough, where he may have seen Kit and Barbara and Barbara's mother and little Jacob and the baby.<sup>1</sup> The entertainment over, "Mr George crosses the water again, and makes his way to that curious region lying about the Haymarket and Leicester Square, which is a centre of attraction to indifferent foreign hotels and indifferent foreigners, racket-courts, fighting-men, swordsmen, footguards, old china, gaming-houses, exhibitions, and a large medley of shabbiness and shrinking out of sight. Penetrating to the heart of this region, he arrives by a court and a long whitewashed passage, at a great brick building, composed of bare walls, floors, roof-rafters, and skylights ;

<sup>1</sup> See *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

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on the front of which, if it can be said to have any front, is painted 'George's Shooting Gallery, etc.' "

I have always imagined this gallery to have been in Panton Square, a "quadrate" abolished in 1868, the name of Arundel Street having been given to it as forming a portion of the street of that name leading into Coventry Street, and to have occupied those premises which in the eighteenth century had been Hickford's Auction Rooms, the Christie's of early Georgian days. Colonel Panton, from whom the square took its name, was a famous gamester of Charles II.'s time, but he was also a pioneer in street development and was responsible for certain "fair buildings fronting the Hay-market upon the said ground," notably the Panton Street he created, which still exists.

No new London landmarks call for notice, the story and its characters hovering about those to which I have already alluded, until, after the interview with Mr Tulkinghorn and the Smallweeds at No. 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Mr George bethinks him of going for advice to his friends the Bagnets, in the Borough. "By the cloisterly Temple, and by Whitefriars (there, not without a glance at Hanging-sword Alley,<sup>1</sup> which would seem to be something in his way), and by Blackfriars Bridge, and Blackfriars Road, Mr George sedately marches to a street of little shops lying somewhere in that ganglion of roads from Kent and Surrey, and of streets from the bridges of London, centring in the far-famed Elephant who has lost his Castle formed of a thousand four-horse coaches, to a stronger iron monster than he, ready to chop him into mincemeat any day he dares." It is to a shop for the sale of musical instruments that Mr George

<sup>1</sup> This seems to me rather a cryptic reference. Hanging-sword Alley does not otherwise occur in *Bleak House*, although, as we have seen, the Crunchers lived there in earlier days. One wonders if Dickens, at the time, intended again to introduce it into the story, and then thought better of it, or forgot it. It is just in his manner to introduce this sort of allusive reference to a place which he meant to develop later. On the other hand, the remark may merely be in reference to George being an old soldier, and Hanging Sword a natural association.



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makes. Here again speculation is useless in view of the numberless thoroughfares answering Dickens's rather vague description, then, and still, to be found in this region.

We need not here linger over such intervening episodes as those connected with Esther's illness; the spontaneous combustion of Krook; and the inquest at the Sol's Arms; the interview between Mr Tulkinghorn and Mr George, in Lincoln's Inn Fields; and that between Esther and Lady Dedlock, in the park at Chesney Wold. Let us glance at legal-land once more, as represented by Mr Vholes's office on the ground floor of Symond's Inn, Chancery Lane. Dickens calls it "a little, pale, wall-eyed, woebegone inn, like a large dustbin of two compartments and a sifter." The site of Symond's Inn, which was not properly an Inn of Court or Chancery at all, but a private concern let out in tenements to law students and others, was just south of the site to-day covered by Bream's Buildings, so ugly and modern as to make us forget any picturesqueness they may have displaced, although they have been described, I really think it must have been ironically, as "a *stately* pile of 110 chambers." Here, in Symond's Inn, Richard fell into the clutches of the significantly named Vholes, and here, worn out by hope deferred, he died.

From this legal atmosphere to the happy, careless environment of Harold Skimpole and his feckless family, is a far cry, in both senses of the words, for they live in the Polygon, in Somers Town<sup>1</sup>—that is to say, his family does; for Harold himself is largely away visiting friends, especially Mr Jarndyce, or in less attractive surroundings in the sponging-house in Cursitor Street. He had, however, occupied the same residence for a number of years (Mr Jarndyce paying the rent), and not unnaturally, considering such a tenant, the place was in an advanced state of dilapidation, two or three of the area railings being gone; the knocker loose; the bell-handle missing; the steps dirty; and the

<sup>1</sup> Let us call it 17 The Polygon, where the Dickens family was living in 1828.



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water-butt broken ! The place was near Euston Terminus, in fact practically where Clarendon Square is to-day, and was so called from its shape. When the houses were new, at the close of the eighteenth century, William Godwin lived in one of them ; but it was not here, as has been asserted, but in Chalton Street that he wrote *Caleb Williams* ; although his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, died in the Polygon abode.

After Krook's death certain changes took place in his house, one of which was the removal of Miss Flite who went into rooms kept by Mrs Blinder, who had had Neckett as a lodger, and had been kind to his children, in Bell Yard. Richard, too, now ill and worn out, is in lodgings next door to Mr Vholes's office, and Mr George is carried off to prison, on a false charge ; " a large prison with many courts and passages " as Esther notes when she and Mr Jarndyce visit him ; possibly Pentonville, then relatively new, only having been completed in 1842.

The murder of Mr Tulkinghorn and the elaborate funeral which sets out from 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields (both Mr *and* Mrs Bucket evincing an extraordinary interest therein), with the former's interviews with Sir Leicester Dedlock and with Mademoiselle Hortense ; above all, the flight of Lady Dedlock, bring us to the concluding stages of the story.

Dickens was never greater than when describing rapid motion ; and the chapters which tell not only of the flight but of the pursuit, are notable even in a book where there is so much that is notable ; they may be placed, as companion pictures, by the side of that chapter in *Dombey and Son*, where another flight—that of Carker—is recorded.

Esther herself tells how she is taken by Bucket to assist in that long and weary search : how they first rattled with great rapidity through such a labyrinth of streets that she soon lost all idea where they were ; how they went to the river-side, and consulted the river-police " at the corner of a slimy little turning " ; how they went away out of London ; and finally turned back ; and how at last she finds her mother (as Lady Dedlock really was) cold and dead, on the

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steps of the little graveyard where Nemo (Captain Hawdon) lay buried.

We close the book on a humorous note : Mr Guppy making another offer for Esther's hand, and laying himself and "the 'ouse in Walcot Square " <sup>1</sup> which he had taken, at her feet.

From one point of view hardly less humorous is the final stage of the great Jarndyce and Jarndyce case when this "Monument of Chancery practice," as Mr Vholes phrases it, became finally extinguished, for the best of all reasons : because the whole estate was found to have been absorbed in the costs. But it had its pathetic side, too, for it killed Richard, as it had killed or blighted the lives of so many others who had been made parties to it ; what time down in Leicestershire Sir Leicester Dedlock, bent and almost blind, with Mr George in attendance, takes horse exercise in his park, and coming to the Mausoleum where his lady lies, removes his hat and is still for a few moments before he rides away.

<sup>1</sup> Walcot Square is near the Bethlehem Hospital, in the Kennington Road.

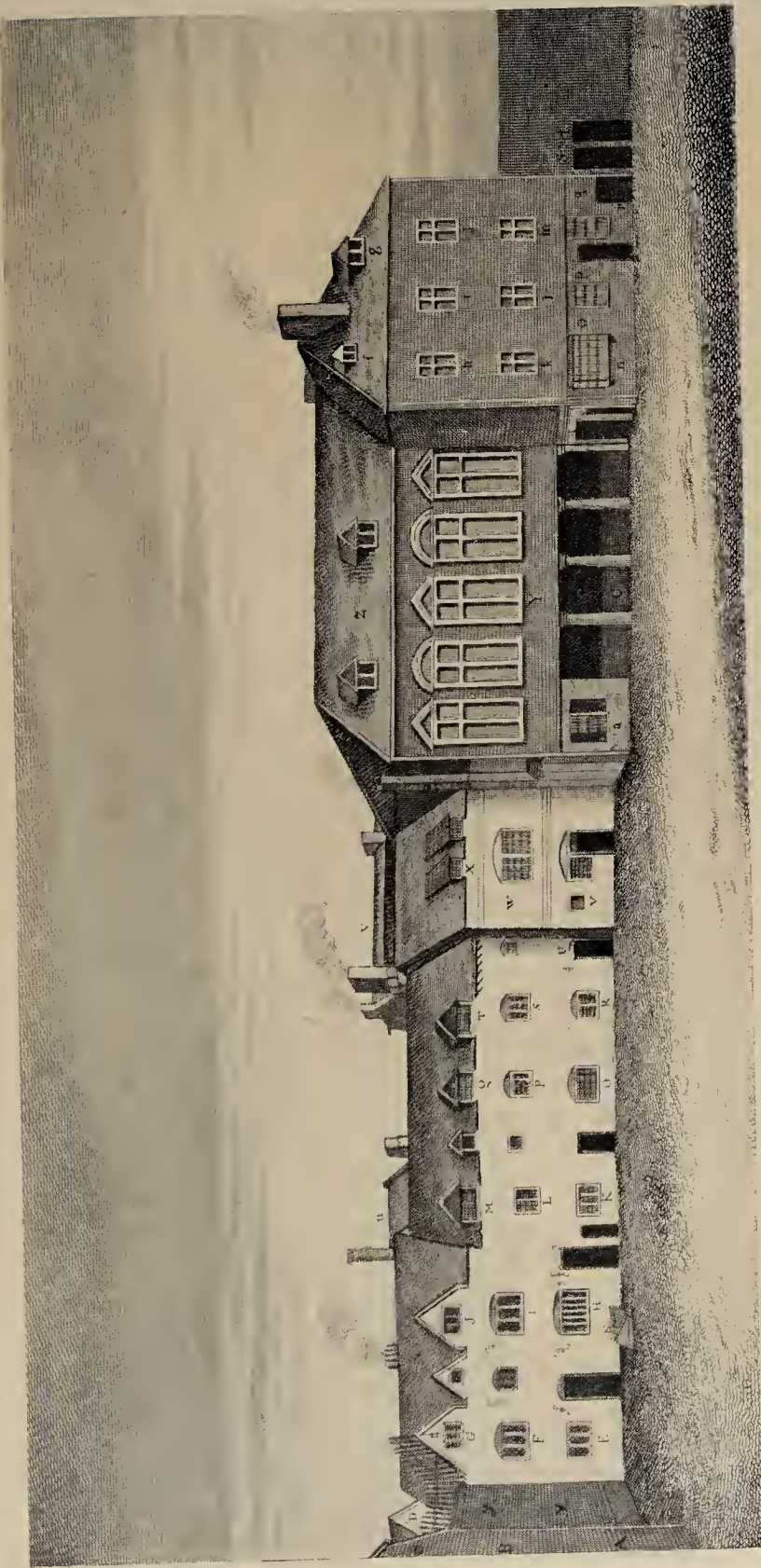
## XII

### LITTLE DORRIT (1855-1856)

*Little Dorrit* is, perhaps, Dickens's least successful book. That it has, here and there, the old unmistakable touch cannot be gainsaid, but it suffers from what the French aptly term *des longueurs*; Phiz's dark plates not uncharacteristically emphasise a certain dreariness in the letterpress; the nose and the moustache of Rigaud, *alias* Blandois, are almost as restless as is the latter appendage on Mr Harry Tate's visage; Mr Merdle and Mrs Gowan are not convincing; Baptist is a kind of Sancho Panza to the Don Quixote (if Don Quixote had been Mephistopheles) of Rigaud. On the other hand, the two old Dorrits; the scenes in the Marshalsea; that appalling Mr Flintwich; Flora (even if she is a bit overdrawn); and above all "Mr F.'s Aunt," are sufficient to carry any amount of supercargo. Many writers might have written much of *Little Dorrit*, and perhaps written it better; but only the one incomparable could have touched off certain of its scenes and characters with the mixture of mirth and pathos which they exhibit.

Herc, for the only time, I think, Dickens begins a novel in foreign parts; and not the fog of London (as in *Bleak House*), or the countryside of Salisbury (as in *Chuzzlewit*), but the heat of Marseilles flames before us as we open the book. It is not germane to my present task of dealing with Dickens's London, but the fact of the story opening in France seems to lend point to an anecdote, not, as they say, generally known, which occurred many years after—an anecdote I give myself the pleasure of repeating. When Bismarck and Jules Favre met under the walls of Paris to discuss terms, while the German guns were waiting to open fire on the city, a gaunt figure was seated in the corner of the room, reading, and





THE MARSHALSEA PRISON  
THE SOUTH FRONT OF THE NORTH SIDE  
AFTER A DRAWING BY I. LEWIS





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apparently oblivious to what was going on ; that figure was Von Moltke, and the <sup>the</sup> book he was immersed in was *Little Dorrit*.

One does not know, of course, at what part of the story the great strategist had arrived, but if it was at Chapter III. he would have read that "It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close, and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling. . . . Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world—all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets."

It was amid such dreary surroundings, so typical of those old days when Sunday was converted from a day of rest to a day of restlessness, that Arthur Clennam, newly arrived from the Marseilles of Rigaud and Baptist ; of the Meagles family and Miss Wade, sat in a window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill, where he had been deposited by the Dover coach. This was the London Coffee House, at No. 24 Ludgate Hill, famous in old days for its wine and good cheer, of which John Leech's father was once the landlord,<sup>1</sup> and which was closed in 1867 ; being later rebuilt and opened as an ordinary tavern ; almost a hundred years after its inauguration as a coffee-house.

Sitting in the same place as the day died, listening to the

<sup>1</sup> In 1838 it was kept by Lovegrove & Son. It was next door to St Martin's Church, on the west.

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interminable jangle of bells ; the dreariness of the English Sunday creeps into his bones, and at last he takes up his hat and walks out. Following him we find that " he crossed by St Paul's and went down, at a long angle, almost to the water's edge, through some of the crooked and descending streets which lie (and lay more crookedly and closely then) between the river and Cheapside. Passing, now the mouldy hall of some obsolete Worshipful Company, now the illuminated windows of a Congregationless Church," he comes to " an old brick house, so dingy as to be all but black, standing by itself within a gateway. Before it, a square courtyard where a shrub or two and a patch of grass were as rank as the iron railings enclosing them were rusty ; behind it a jumble of roofs. It was a double house, with long, narrow, heavily-framed windows. Many years ago, it had it in its mind to slide down sideways ; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches." <sup>1</sup> This is Arthur's home, which may have had its prototype in the fine old Charles II. mansion once standing close to Botolph Lane, and here his terrible mother lives with the Flintwiches in attendance. It was probably in Thames Street, although so altered is all this part, through the advent of warehouses and business premises, the demolition of old churches, and the opening up of new thoroughfares, that it is impossible to say with any assurance exactly where the tumble-down old house, which had at one time obviously been one of some importance, was situated.

In the course of a day or two Clennam had looked through the whole house, and the description given of it confirms the fact of a former kind of state—a state which time and neglect had reduced to the utmost limit of desolation. If it is impossible to " place " this ill-omened residence, there is no difficulty, in this connection, about the next London landmark to which we are introduced—namely, the Marshalsea.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note this passage, as it forestalls the final collapse of the house, concerning which Dickens was criticised ; see later, Chapter XXXI. of Book II.

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I have before had occasion in these pages to refer to that bygone relic of an idiotic judicial system, and, therefore, need not again enlarge on it, except to quote what Dickens here says about it :

“Thirty years ago [he is writing in 1856], there stood, a few doors short of the church of St George, in the borough of Southwark, on the left-hand side of the way going southward, the Marshalsea Prison. It had stood there many years before, and it remained there some years afterwards ; but it is gone now, and the world is none the worse without it. It was an oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back, so that there were no back rooms ; environed by a narrow paved yard, hemmed in by high walls duly spiked at top. Itself a close and confined prison for debtors, it contained within it a much closer and more confined gaol for smugglers. Offenders against the revenue laws, and defaulters to excise or customs, who had incurred fines which they were unable to pay, were supposed to be incarcerated behind an iron-plated door, closing up a second prison, consisting of a strong cell or two, and a blind alley some yard and a half wide, which formed the mysterious termination of the very limited skittle-ground in which the Marshalsea debtors bowled down their troubles. Supposed to be incarcerated there, because the time had rather outgrown the strong cells and the blind alley. In practice they had come to be considered a little too bad, though in theory they were quite as good as ever. . . . Hence the smugglers habitually consorted with the debtors (who received them with open arms), except at certain constitutional moments when somebody came from some Office, to go through some form of overlooking something, which neither he nor anybody else knew anything about.”

The Marshalsea had been established as early as the reign of Edward III., and existed down to that of Queen Victoria, but when Dickens was examining the neighbourhood, during the writing of *Little Dorrit*, with the object of finding out if anything of the place he as a boy knew, survived, he



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discovered little except some lower portions of the old walls, the "narrow yard," and a few of the paving stones "in Marshalsea Place, turning out of Angel Court leading to Bermondsey."<sup>1</sup> To-day the investigator will find nothing but the site covered by more recent erections. In Wilkinson's *Londina Illustrata* (1825) is a plate representing the Marshalsea, and by an accompanying plan we see that it stood between what were then King Street and Mermaid Court, early opposite Union Street, and abutting on the Boroughn High Street, just south of St George's Church.

Here old Dorrit, "who was going out directly—because the Marshalsea lock never turned upon a debtor who was not," had been confined for a number of years; and it is around the Marshalsea that so much of the first part of the story centres—the Marshalsea of which old Dorrit had become the Father. Here little Dorrit, his daughter, was born, being christened at the adjacent St George's Church—the turnkey acting as godfather—and blossomed into the Child of the Marshalsea, looking after her father, her sister Fanny, who became a dancer, and her brother Tip, who became a ne'er-do-well, after languishing in an attorney's office in Clifford's Inn for six months, assisting at a mock-auction in Moorfields, and finally returning as a "regular" to the Marshalsea itself.

When Arthur Clennam comes across Little Dorrit, he learns something about the causes of her father's incarceration; he also learns that there is a friend, who was once in the prison himself, named Plornish, "only a plasterer," and that he lives in Bleeding Heart Yard, at the last house, "with his name over a little gateway." This yard is off Charles Street, at the top of Hatton Garden, or it can be reached by a narrow way from the north end of Ely Place. Mr Edgar Pemberton, writing in 1876, professed himself unable to find the place.

"True," he says, "there is in Charles Street, Hatton Garden, a Bleeding Hart Yard, but, notwithstanding certain attributes which it has, in common with the one for which we

<sup>1</sup> See Preface to *Little Dorrit*.

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are in search, we cannot quite accept it as the identical yard in which the Plornishes lived, and Doyce & Clennam had their factory. If it be the one in question, it has undergone a change, and that certainly for the worse." Indeed it has, still more so now than when the above was written; but I see no reason to doubt its being the authentic place. Horwood's plan of 1799 shows it clearly as Bleeding Heart Yard; and no doubt the change of the second word was merely fortuitous. Chapter XII. has its name for title, and Dickens thus describes it:

"In London itself, though in the old rustic road towards a suburb of note where in the days of William Shakespeare, author and stage-player, there were Royal hunting-seats, howbeit no sport is left there now but for hunters of men, Bleeding Heart Yard was to be found. A place much changed in feature and in fortune, yet with some relish of ancient greatness about it. Two or three mighty stacks of chimneys, and a few large dark rooms which had escaped being walled and subdivided out of the recognition of their old proportions, gave the Yard a character. . . . As if the aspiring city had become puffed up in the very ground on which it stood, the ground had so risen about Bleeding Heart Yard that you got into it down a flight of steps which formed no part of the original approach, and got out of it by a low gateway into a maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again. At this end of the Yard, and over the gateway, was the factory of Daniel Doyce, often heavily beating like a bleeding heart of iron, with the clink of metal upon metal."

Here, as we learn later, Mr Casby's property lay, the rents of which grasping "Patriarch" were collected by Mr Pancks.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reader will no doubt remember "The House Warming—a Legend of Bleeding Heart Yard," in *The Ingoldsby Legends*, with its final warning:

"Don't go of a night into Bleeding House Yard,  
It's a dark, little, dirty, black, ill-looking square  
With queer people about. . . ."

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Far away in the west—the very antithesis of the Yard—stands the residence of Mr Tite Barnacle, one of that numerous and limpet-like family connected with the Circumlocution Office and the great, eternal principle of “How not to do it.” Mews Street, Grosvenor Square, the locality in question, “was not absolutely Grosvenor Square itself, but it was very near it. It was a hideous little street of dead wall, stables, and dunghills, with lofts over coach-houses inhabited by coachmen’s families, who had a passion for drying clothes, and decorating their window-sills with miniature turnpike-gates.” When Arthur Clennam comes hither to see Mr Tite Barnacle (not to be found at the Office), he discovers No. 24, the house in question, to be “a squeezed house, with a ramshackle bowed front, little dingy windows, and a little dark area like a damp waistcoat pocket. . . . To the sense of smell, the house was like a sort of bottle filled with a strong distillation of mews; and when the footman opened the door, he seemed to take the stopper out.”

It is impossible, with this excellent atmospheric, but vague, description of a little street hanging on to the skirts of London’s most fashionable and opulent square, to say actually what thoroughfare was the prototype of Mews Street. It might have been George Street or Lumley Street on the north; or one of the streets close to what is now Carlos Place on the south—Mount Row or Adam’s Mews; but perhaps Farm Street would be nearer the mark.

The residence, on the other hand, of Mr Casby, the Patriarch, was in a street in the Gray’s Inn Road, “which had set off from that thoroughfare with the intention of running at one heat down into the valley, and up again to the top of Pentonville Hill; but which had run itself out of breath in twenty yards, and had stood still ever since. There is no such place in that part now; but it remained there for many years.”

If you look at some of the maps of the earlier half of the last century, you will find lots of streets that might well have contained the abode of Mr Casby; but as Dickens says it no



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longer existed when he was writing *Little Dorrit*, it would only be unprofitable guesswork to hazard a theory. All one need say here is that Mr Pancks, Casby's *âme damnée*, and "the fairy" of *Little Dorrit* lived not far off in that Pentonville district in which we meet with so many of Dickens's characters. It was on the occasion of Clennam's walk with Pancks, after the dinner at Casby's, when Mr F.'s aunt had stated her general objection to fools, and her topographical knowledge of the Dover Road, that Arthur comes across Baptist who has been run over by a mail-cart. "They had crossed Smithfield together, and Clennam was left alone at the corner of Barbican. . . . He turned slowly down Aldersgate Street, and was pondering his way along to St Paul's . . . when a crowd of people flocked towards him on the same pavement, and he stood aside against a shop to let them pass." They are gathered round a litter on which lies the little foreigner, being taken to St Bartholomew's Hospital, where Clennam sees him safely ensconced, subsequently proceeding by way of Snow Hill and Holborn to the lodgings he had hired in Covent Garden.

To this lodging, not long after his arrival, which was nearly midnight, comes Little Dorrit. Dickens takes occasion to give us, in a quite poetical passage, the girl's conception of that quarter of the town :

"Courtly ideas of Covent Garden," he writes, "as a place with famous coffee-houses, where gentlemen wearing gold-laced coats and swords had quarrelled and fought duels; costly ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there were flowers in winter at guineas a-piece, pineapples at guineas a pound, and peas at guineas a pint; picturesque ideas of Covent Garden, as a place where there was a mighty theatre, showing wonderful and beautiful sights to richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and which was for ever beyond the reach of poor Fanny or poor uncle; desolate ideas of Covent Garden, as having all those arches in it, where the miserable children in rags among whom she had just now passed, like young rats, slunk and hid, fed on offal, huddled together for



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warmth, and were hunted about ; teeming ideas of Covent Garden, as a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street-gutters, all confused together."

Back from her interview, and with such thoughts in her brain, Little Dorrit, with Maggy in attendance, returns to the regions of the Marshalsea, where, being shut out, they pass the weary hours, in the darkness of Phiz's drawing, outside the darkness of that stronghold.

While Mrs Flintwich is having one of her dreams, and Clennam and Doyce go to see the Meagles at Twickenham, young Chivery, the son of the Marshalsea turnkey, is sighing for Little Dorrit, from the unromantic atmosphere of a snug little tobacco business, round the corner of Horse-monger Lane, which had a connection with the Collegians of the Marshalsea, as they were called.

Horsemonger Lane is chiefly associated with Horsemonger Gaol, where Leigh Hunt was once confined, by the way, and outside which the public executions for Surrey took place. Dickens witnessed one of these (that of the Mannings in 1849), and has left us a vivid account of the scene, in a letter he wrote to *The Times* the same day. A recreation ground now occupies the site of the prison, and Horsemonger Lane is known to us as Union Road. The tobacconist shop, where young Chivery assisted his mother, is said to be No. 5, although the place hardly fits in with the description Dickens gives of it as "a rural establishment one storey high, which had the benefit of the air from the yards of Horsemonger Lane Gaol, and the advantage of a retired walk under the wall of that pleasant establishment." It had a little Highlander on a bracket at the doorpost, "who looked like a fallen Cherub that had found it necessary to take to a kilt."

It is less easy to identify the theatre at which Fanny Dorrit performed ; and we follow Little Dorrit on her visit there, she having been first to Mr Cripples's Academy, probably in Lant Street, where old Frederick and his niece lodged, in almost as great an ignorance of locality as the

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child was herself. But one can hazard a guess, and shall not, I think, be far wrong in saying it was the Surrey Theatre, at the south end of the Blackfriars Road, which had been built on the site of an earlier one destroyed by fire in 1806, and which was itself destined to the same fate in January 1865—the present house being erected and opened in the following December. It was probably during Creswick's management that Fanny Dorrit was engaged there.

On the occasion of this visit, it will be remembered, Fanny takes her sister to see Mrs Merdle, in Harley Street. This lady's residence was, we are told, the handsomest house in the thoroughfare ; indeed the spacious semicircular drawing-room was "far more splendid than anything Little Dorrit had ever imagined, and would have been splendid and costly in any eyes." Dickens gives us a vignette of this street which has now become well-nigh entirely professional :

"Like unexceptionable society, the opposing rows of houses in Harley Street were very grim with one another. Indeed, the mansions and their inhabitants were so much alike in that respect that the people were often to be found drawn up on opposite sides of dinner-tables, in the shade of their own loftiness, staring at the other side of the way with the dullness of the houses. Everybody knows how like the street the two dinner-rows of people who take their stand by the street will be. The expressionless uniform twenty houses, all to be knocked up and rung at in the same form, all approachable by the same dull steps, all fended off by the same pattern of railing, all with the same impracticable fire-escapes, the same inconvenient fixtures in their heads, and everything, without exception, to be taken at a high valuation—who has not dined with these ? "

There would seem little in common between the ostentatious surroundings of the Merdles,<sup>1</sup> and Arthur Clennam visiting the Marshalsea, or looking in, by request, at the little tobacconist's shop kept by Mrs Chivery ; or returning, not

<sup>1</sup> Sadleir, the forger, is generally regarded as the prototype of Mr Merdle—they both committed suicide.

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by London Bridge, because of the crowd, but by the Iron Bridge, another name for Southwark Bridge, opened first in 1819, where young Chivery used to put down his penny on the toll plate,<sup>1</sup> when loitering about for Little Dorrit ; but there *is* a connection which leads to strange results, as readers of the book know. Indeed, as is usual in the works of Dickens, all sorts of apparently unconnected persons and events get finally fitted into each other like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. One of these pieces is represented by the appearance of Mr Meagles in Clennam's lodging, at Covent Garden, with the news that Tattycoram has disappeared. With a view to finding her, or at least getting some useful information towards that end, the friends go in quest of Miss Wade's abode, which Mr Meagles has a hazy idea is situated somewhere near Park Lane. "They rode to the top of Oxford Street, and there alighting, dived in among the great streets of melancholy stateliness, and the little streets that try to be as stately and succeed in being more melancholy, of which there is a labyrinth near Park Lane. Wildernesses of corner houses, with barbarous old porticoes and appurtenances ; horrors that came into existence under some wrong-headed person in some wrong-headed time, still demanding the blind admiration of all ensuing generations and determined to do so until they tumbled down ; frowned upon the twilight. Parasite little tenements, with the cramp in their whole frame, from the dwarf hall-door on the giant model of his Grace's in the Square, to the squeezed window of the boudoir commanding the dunghills in the Mews, made the evening doleful. . . . The roll of carriages in the Park was done for the day ; the street lamps were lighting." Finally in a dismal, dirty house, with bills indicating it was to let, in a street, "long, regular, narrow, dull, and gloomy ; like a brick and mortar funeral," they run their quarry to earth.

While Mr Clennam's house in the city continued to preserve its heavy dullness during this period, Mr Flintwich is strangely busy : going about "to counting-houses, and

<sup>1</sup> It was made free of tolls in 1866.



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to wharfs, and docks, and to the Custom House, and to Garraway's Coffee House, and the Jerusalem Coffee House, and on 'Change."

The Custom House and the Royal Exchange hardly require annotation; but Garraway's and the Jerusalem coffee-houses are things of the past, and therefore need a word of explanation. The former, situated in 'Change Alley, Cornhill, had been famous from the days of Swift, who mentions it in his *South-Sea Project*, published in 1721. Later, in addition to being a coffee-house and mart of news and business, it became one of the chief auction-rooms in the city. So early as 1673, we hear of wine being sold here "by the candle." It was finally closed in 1866. The latter was in the next alley, Cowper's Court, and was a subscription house for East India and China merchants. It was demolished in 1879, but rebuilt on more convenient lines. It is pretty certain that Flintwich might, too, have been seen in the Jamaica Coffee House, in St Michael's Alley, which was a very similar place to the Jerusalem Coffee House.

We visit, in the succeeding chapters, many of those haunts to which we have already penetrated: Mr Clennam's abode, with Rigaud, *alias* Blandois, darkly appearing; and Mrs Merdle's mansion; and above all the Marshalsea, gorgeous and hilarious, for once, as the Dorrit family emerge, free and rich, with Little Dorrit, in her old dress (to Fanny's dismay and annoyance), carried out fainting in Clennam's arms.

With the second half of the story we are wafted to the Alps and Venice, the Dorrit family travelling in great state with Mrs General, who guided their footsteps, and was important enough "to have a line to herself in the travellers' book." Indeed there is not much more concerning London which can be regarded as fresh; because such of the *dramatis personæ* as are not disporting themselves amid the ruins of Rome or the canals of Venice, do not break fresh ground in the metropolis, and the story unravels itself amid familiar surroundings. When, however, the Dorrits return from



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their foreign tour, they put up at a private hotel in Brook Street, where Cousin Feenix's house was, you will remember, and where Mr Dorrit is visited, with disastrous consequences, by Mr Merdle; a visit which causes unwonted excitement in the office of the hotel; and also, with ignominious consequences to the visitor, by young Chivery.

The death of Dorrit, in the gorgeous Roman Palace, which to his shrunken brain had diminished to the size of those old familiar surroundings in the Marshalsea; the suicide of the forger Merdle, bringing grief and distress on thousands of gulls; the catastrophic collapse (so significant of the collapse of many of the hopes and aspirations of certain characters in the book) of Mrs Clennam's house, with Rigaud in his hour of triumph buried beneath the *débris*, bring the book within sight of its conclusion.

In July 1857 *The Edinburgh Review*, in a caustic article aimed at *Little Dorrit*, suggested that the disaster that befell Mrs Clennam's abode was "evidently borrowed from the recent fall of houses in Tottenham Court Road,<sup>1</sup> which happens to have appeared in the newspapers at a convenient moment." But Dickens, in *Household Words* for the following month, was able to point out that the circumstance referred to in the tale was "carefully prepared for from the very first presentation of the old house in the story," and that "the catastrophe was written, was engraven on steel, was printed, had passed through the hands of the compositors, readers for the press, and pressmen, and was in type and in proof . . . before the accident in Tottenham Court Road occurred."

It is appropriate that, as the Marshalsea has more or less dominated *Little Dorrit*, the eponymous heroine should be married at the neighbouring Church of St George, where she was christened, and in the churchyard of which she had been destined, in the brain of young Chivery, to be laid, after she had been *his* wife, passing her whole career in the Marshalsea where, according to his imaginative audacities, "she was born, lived, and died." Such a fate, as we all know,

<sup>1</sup> They formed the premises of Messrs Maple & Co.

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was not in store for her ; but a happier fortune after her many trials and tribulations, as the wife of Arthur Clennam. The first stage of this bright future was that begun on the steps of the portico of St George's Church where, for a few moments, the two stood "looking at the fresh perspective of the street in the autumn morning sun's bright rays," before they went down "to a modest life of usefulness and happiness."

### XIII

#### GREAT EXPECTATIONS (1860-1861)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS was the last but one of Dickens's completed major books, as they may be termed. Unlike its predecessors it did not appear in monthly parts, but in the three volumes which in those days, and for long after, was the recognised form of such publications. It is in many respects a remarkable book, for it combines its writer's later, matured and, if one may say so, chastened style, with certain of those mannerisms and a reliance on physical attributes as an indication of character, as well as something of the caricature element (as I cannot but think Miss Havisham exemplifies), which were concomitants of some of his earlier, less subdued, work.

In one sense *Great Expectations* may be said to be his best novel—to use the word in its general acceptance. And for this there was one very obvious reason. He was able to write it *en bloc*, so to phrase it; the difficulty incident to the monthly instalments did not present itself; there was no need to close a section on an appropriate note; no necessity for that troublesome consideration (as Dickens often found it) as to whether the right number of words had been produced for each part, a difficulty which, at least on one occasion, necessitated the entire recasting of a monthly number. Then, again, it fulfils the conditions of a novel in that there is at least an attempt at a more or less comprehensible plot. Its structure, so to speak, is excellent, and I think it only fails in being a masterpiece because the characters, with the exception of Pip himself and perhaps Joe Gargery, are not, on the whole, so attractive or impressive as are those in the earlier works. But it is time to turn to the London element in the book, which here alone concerns us.



LOWER POOL  
FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY T. R. WAY





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In recent years London has grown so enormously, has stretched out its tentacles so far-reachingly on all sides, that one has to consider, for a moment, if those dreary, fog-laden marshes, among which and the escaped convicts the book opens, cannot be considered to be part and parcel of the metropolis. Of course they are not in London ; indeed they are far away in Kent, but they have an affinity with those Plumstead Flats towards which the Wen actually extends ; and Cooling Church, near which Pip first sees Magwitch and later supplies him with “ wittles,” overlooks the same water which but recently flowed beneath London Bridge and grew turbulent at Gravesend.

It is not, however, till Chapter XV. that even the name of London occurs, and then it is but in the refrain of a comic song, which Biddy had once bought for a halfpenny and communicated to Pip’s youthful intelligence, and which ran :

“ When I went to Lunnon town, sirs,  
Too rul loo rul !  
Too rul loo rul !  
Wasn’t I done very brown, sirs ?  
Too rul loo rul !  
Too rul loo rul ! ”

Pip was, before long, to become better acquainted with this same Lunnon ; indeed it was in the fourth year of his apprenticeship to Joe Gargery that, being with his burly friend one Saturday night, he meets Mr Jaggers (whom he remembers to have seen before at Miss Havisham’s), at the Three Jolly Bargemen. That gentleman, after giving Mr Wopsle a dressing down, informs Pip that he has some unusual business to transact with him ; which he proceeds forthwith to do by telling him that he has great expectations, and further, that he is to be removed from his present surroundings and to be brought up as a gentleman—the first stage in which metamorphosis should be, it is agreed, undertaken by a certain Mr Matthew Pocket.

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Thus in Chapter I. of the second volume we are carried away from Rochester, in company with Pip, by the four-horse stage-coach, leaving Joe and Biddy and Pumblechook and that terrifying "Trabb's boy," and find ourselves set down at the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside. The Castle, at 25 Wood Street, was the prototype of this tavern, the name of the Cross Keys probably being suggested to Dickens by such a sign in Gracechurch Street.<sup>1</sup> Even at this early stage Pip is "scared by the immensity of London, and had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty."

Having previously received from Mr Jaggers that gentleman's address, which was in Little Britain, "just out of Smithfield, and close by the coach-office," he proceeds thither in a hackney-coach, which smelt like a straw-yard or a rag-shop—Pip could not quite determine which. Mr Jaggers, on his arrival, being in Court, Pip awaits his return in an inner chamber at the back of the office, illuminated solely by a skylight—a most dismal place.

After waiting a long while, Pip told the clerk that he would take a turn outside, whereupon he is advised "to go round the corner into Smithfield." "So," he says, "I came into Smithfield; and the shameful place, being all asmeared with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me. So I rubbed it off with all possible speed by turning into a street where I saw the great black dome of St Paul's bulging at me from behind a grim stone building which a bystander said was Newgate Prison." Smithfield has been so altered since those times that Pip would hardly know it to-day. Dickens evidently places the date of the story anterior to the year 1855, when the last market for horses, cattle and sheep was held there and Smithfield Market, as such, finally closed. The open space is much less restricted than it was in Pip's day, as a large portion of it has since been covered by the structure known as the Central Meat, Poultry and Provision

<sup>1</sup> See the reference to Dickens's own arrival at the Cross Keys, in *The Uncommercial Traveller*: "Dullborough Town."

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Market, erected *circa* 1868-1870. Little Britain, too, has changed, although something of a past air still clings to it and the purlieus of St Bartholomew the Great.

Presently, looking out at the iron gate of Bartholomew Close into Little Britain, Pip sees Jaggers approaching. It is arranged that Pip shall go temporarily to young Mr Pocket's rooms in Barnard's Inn. This inn Pip discovers to be a very different sort of place from what he had imagined—indeed to be “the dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats.”

Barnard's Inn,<sup>1</sup> on the south side of Holborn, opposite the spot where Furnival's Inn used to be before the great red-brick insurance offices wiped it out of existence, had its entrance from the thoroughfare between Nos. 22 and 23 High Holborn, and possessed a little red-brick hall, the smallest of any of those belonging to the Inns of Court. “We entered this haven,” Pip tells us, “through a wicket-gate, and were disgorged by an introductory passage into a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying-ground. I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses (in number half-a-dozen or so) that I had ever seen. I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which these houses were divided were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift; while To Let To Let To Let, glared at me from empty rooms, as if no new wretches ever came there, and the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the gradual suicide of the present occupants and their unholy interment under the gravel.”

I have quoted this passage because it helps to illustrate what has always seemed to me a wrong conception entertained by most people of Dickens's attitude towards London. There is a sort of general idea that he loved London. Perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Biddy, like Pip himself, imagined it to be a sort of tavern kept by one Barnard, and the former calls it, on one occasion, Barnard's Hotel.



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in a way he did, but it did not prevent him from seeing its drawbacks ; from always insisting upon them ; from continually acting the candid friend. Over and over again he is telling us how dirty and squalid it is, how it cannot compare with the Continental capitals ; over and over again he sees, with microscopic eye, the dreary attributes rather than the inherent charm and picturesqueness of its old Inns of Court, its ancient taverns, its neglected little back-waters. In his day, as also in our own times, much existed and exists capable of improvement ; but it seems to me that the true lover of London is not one who is continually insisting on such drawbacks, but one who recognises the charm of the city in spite of them. I always think that Dickens used London as an excellent *motif*, and that what he really found fascinating about it was not its streets and buildings in themselves, but the characters he collected among them.

Under the guidance of Herbert Pocket, Pip goes, in the evening of his first day in London, for a walk in the streets, ending with a half-price at the theatre. The next day, being Sunday, they went to church at the Abbey, and in the afternoon walked in Hyde Park, where Pip “wondered who shod all the horses, and wished Joe did.” As the Pocket family lived at Hammersmith, the two proceeded there by coach on the following morning, probably getting out at the Red Cow, that once picturesque feature on the Hammersmith Road, close to St Paul’s School, which was pulled down in 1897.

Hammersmith is one of those outlying portions of London which have materially changed since the days of Dickens, but here and there may be found little late Georgian or early Victorian houses, now become part and parcel of new streets, whose form and truncated gardens clearly indicate that at an earlier time they stood by themselves in quasi-rural surroundings. In one such Sir Henry Irving (whose “Jingle” links him up with the author of *Pickwick*) once lived.

In the Pockets’ feckless household Pip lived, keeping at the same time the room in Barnard’s Inn, and doing some boating on the river. This routine was diversified by, among

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other things, a visit with Wemmick to his house at Walworth. It was a curious place. "It appeared to be a collection of black lanes, ditches, and little gardens, and to present the aspect of a rather dull retirement. Wemmick's house was a little wooden cottage in the midst of plots of gardens, and the top of it was cut out and painted like a battery mounted with guns." "My own doing," said Wemmick. "Looks pretty; don't it?"

The Walworth of to-day, one of the most crowded and populous districts in London, presents so different an aspect from what it did when Wemmick lived there that it is impossible to say whereabouts this little cottage-fortress, with its gothic windows and *drawbridge*, "a plank over a chasm about four feet wide and two deep," was situated; but a glance at a plan of London, *circa* 1850, will show so much ground still undeveloped between Kennington Oval and the Old Kent Road that one can easily visualise such surroundings as Dickens describes. Here "the Aged" lived with his son; here he duly heated the poker which was used for the firing of the little piece of ordnance—the Stinger—and here that redoubtable fire-arm went off with such a bang as shook the crazy little box of a cottage, so that Pip thought it must fall to pieces, what time every glass and cup it contained rang again at the detonation.

Such was the abode of the clerk; that of the principal was in a very different locality—Gerrard Street, Soho, memorable for its association with Dryden and Burke, and Lord Mohun who fought the famous duel with the Duke of Hamilton, who all lived in it, and for the Turk's Head Tavern, where the Literary Club was founded by Dr Johnson. Dryden's house was No. 43, on the south side, and Burke's No. 37, a few doors off; and as Mr Jaggers resided on the same side of the street, it is pleasant to imagine him inhabiting either the former abode of the great poet or that of the great statesman. It was, we are told, "rather a stately house of its kind, but dolefully in want of painting, and with dirty windows." Jaggers occupied a series of three dark brown rooms on the

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first floor, up a dark brown staircase; there were carved garlands on the panelled walls, which reminded Pip of different kinds of loops with which his host was not unconnected—the kind of loops, indeed, associated with Newgate, to which Pip goes in the company of Wemmick, who runs against him one day while he is haunting the vicinity of the coach-office in Wood Street, in anticipation of Estella's arrival there from Rochester. "We were at Newgate in a few minutes, and we passed through the lodge where some fetters were hanging up on the bare walls among the prison rules, into the interior of the jail." "At that time," adds Dickens, "jails were much neglected, and the period of exaggerated reaction consequent on all public wrong-doing was still far off. So, felons were not lodged and fed better than soldiers (to say nothing of paupers), and seldom set fire to their prisons with the excusable object of improving the flavour of their soup." Parting from Wemmick, as they went back to the office in Little Britain, Pit returned to his watch at the coach-office—a good three hours before Estella's coach was due. When she did arrive he finds he is to escort her to "a staid old house, where hoops and powder and patches, embroidered coats, rolled stockings, ruffles, and swords, had had their court days many a time" on Richmond Green—obviously one of the Georgian residences known as Maids of Honour Row.

We can accompany Pip, too, to that club known as the Finches of the Grove, which held its meetings in an hotel in Covent Garden and to which he had been elected at Startop's suggestion, and where he first meets Bentley Drummle. But it was Richmond that he now haunted chiefly, going thither from Hammersmith, sometimes accompanied by Herbert, whose chief occupation at this time was going to Lloyd's or hanging about 'Change, with no very well-defined object.

Never before was, I suppose, the subject of the Thames bridges introduced into a conversation in so dramatic a way as when Jaggers, being asked by Pip for advice as to lending



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a friend some money, does not directly reply, but exclaims : “ ‘Mr Pip, I should like just to run over with you on my fingers, if you please, the names of the bridges up as high as Chelsea Reach. Let’s see ; there’s London, one ; Southwark, two ; Blackfriars, three ; Waterloo, four ; Westminster, five ; Vauxhall, six. There’s as many as six, you see, to choose from.’ ‘I don’t understand you,’ said I. ‘Choose your bridge, Mr Pip, and take a walk upon your bridge, and pitch your money into the Thames over the centre arch of your bridge, and you know the end of it. Serve a friend with it, and you may know the end of it too—but it’s a less pleasant and profitable end.’ ” Lambeth Bridge, it will be observed, is not mentioned ; the reason being that in spite of there having been one there in ancient times, the modern bridge was erected only in 1862, a year after the appearance of *Great Expectations*, although it is marked as projected in a plan dated twelve years earlier.

Pip was now twenty-three, and had been living with Pocket in rooms in the Temple in Garden Court for over a year, having left the less salubrious vicinity of Barnard’s Inn. They dwelt at the top of the last house, down by the river, but as Dickens himself remarks, “alterations have been made in that part of the Temple since that time, and it has not now so lonely a character as it had then, nor is it so exposed to the river.” The construction of the Embankment resulted in the Thames being farther removed, as it were, from the Temple precincts ; and it is, therefore, difficult, without remembering the changes that have here taken place, to imagine Garden Court as being “down by the river.” As a matter of fact Garden Court was rebuilt in 1824, and I cannot but think that Dickens had in mind its outlines before this took place ; although as we have seen, apropos of the bridges, in some cases he makes the scenario of *Great Expectations* almost contemporaneous with the date of its publication.

It was in the rooms in Garden Court, on a blustery night, that Magwitch *alias* Provis reveals himself to the horrified



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young man, as the convict of the Kentish marshes, and the author of Pip's great expectations. As it was obviously impossible for this redoubtable visitor to remain in the Temple, without creating suspicion, Pip, after much troubled consideration, arranged for him to have rooms on the second floor in a respectable lodging-house he knew of in Essex Street, on the east side, the back of which looked into the Temple, and was almost within hail of his windows. Here Magwitch remained in hiding, going to and fro between Essex Street and Garden Court, Pip always taking him home, and looking well about him, in fear of the lurking figure he had seen on his staircase on the night of the convict's arrival.

It was when Pip had returned from seeing Estella at Rochester, having walked all the way back, and only passing over London Bridge at midnight, that he was entering the Whitefriars gate to the Temple, when a messenger who had been awaiting him put into his hand a piece of paper on which was written, in Wemmick's handwriting: "Don't go home." We know how, profiting by this warning, he made his way to Fleet Street and, getting a late hackney-coach, drove to the Hummums in Covent Garden. "In those times a bed was always to be got there at any hour of the night, and the chamberlain, letting me in at his ready wicket, lighted the candle next in order on his shelf, and showed me straight into the bedroom next in order on his list."

The Old Hummums Hotel was the name of this establishment, which was closed in 1865, the site having been acquired for the extension of Covent Garden Market. The New Hummums next door was entirely rebuilt in 1888.

A subsequent conversation with Wemmick results in the information that Magwitch, for greater safety, had been removed to a certain "house with the bow-window, being by the river-side, down the Pool there between Limehouse and Greenwich, and being kept, it seems, by a very respectable widow, who has a furnished upper floor to let"—the house, indeed, in which Herbert's *fiancée* Clara and her invalid father were lodging. Chapter VII. of the third volume

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describes how Pip goes down there, and incidentally affords a graphic picture of that neighbourhood :

“All that water-side region of the upper and lower Pool below Bridge, was unknown ground to me,” says Pip, “and when I struck down by the river, I found that the spot I wanted was not where I supposed it to be, and was anything but easy to find. It was called Mill Pond Bank, Chinks’s Basin ; and I had no other guide to Chinks’s Basin than the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk. It matters not what stranded ships repairing in dry docks I lost myself among, what old hulls of ships in course of being knocked to pieces, what ooze and slime and other dregs of tide, what yards of ship-builders and ship-breakers, what rusty anchors blindly biting into the ground, though for years off duty, what mountainous country of accumulated casks and timber, how many rope-walks that were not the Old Green Copper. After several times falling short of my destination and as often overshooting it, I came unexpectedly round a corner, upon Mill Pond Bank. It was a fresh kind of place, all circumstances considered, where the wind from the river had room to turn itself round ; and there were two or three trees in it, and there was the stump of a ruined windmill, and there was the Old Green Copper Rope-Walk—whose long and narrow vista I could trace in the moonlight, along a series of wooden frames set in the ground, that looked like superannuated haymaking-rakes which had grown old and lost most of their teeth.

“Selecting . . . a house with a wooden front and three stories of bow-window (not bay-window, which is another thing), I looked at the plate upon the door, and read there Mrs Whimple.” Here he found Magwitch, with Herbert Pocket, on guard.

The reader should make the most of the above descriptive passage, for it is as near as he is likely to get to an identification of the place—if even the slightest identification can be gleaned from it—whither Magwitch had been conveyed for safety.

Portions of that district south of the West India Docks

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are even to-day derelict ; but at the period of Pip's visit it was all open ground, as Dickens describes it, with here and there a lonely dwelling, intersected by innumerable ropewalks ; and only along the river-side a sufficient number of small houses to justify the presence of a little chapel, marked on a contemporary plan. On that plan can also be seen Snooks's Dock and Blackett's Dock, and I imagine one of these to have served as model for Mill Pond Dock ; if it was the latter, then Mrs Whimple's little house was probably among the collocation of tenements shown lying just to the south of it.

The attempt of Pip and his friends to get Magwitch on to an outward-bound ship, by rowing him down the river—an attempt that proved unsuccessful—is among the most dramatic and exciting episodes to be found in any of Dickens's novels. We know how, in furtherance of this project, Pip had for some time kept a boat at the Temple Stairs, and had rowed it up and down the lower reaches of the river, in order that his doing so might, from its familiarity, not arouse suspicion. At first he kept above Blackfriars Bridge, but as the hours of the tide changed, he went farther towards London Bridge. “It was Old London Bridge in those days, and at certain states of the tide there was a race and a fall of water there which gave it a bad reputation. But I knew well enough how to ‘shoot’ the bridge after seeing it done, and so began to row about among the shipping in the Pool, and down to Erith.”

This passage is interesting because it dates the story approximately—for new London Bridge, the first pile of which had been driven in 1824, was opened in 1831, so that *Great Expectations* must be regarded as describing the manners and customs of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. With regard to the bridge under which Pip “shot,” it must be remembered that although it was old London Bridge, it differed essentially from that picturesque structure, with houses on it, with which so many old prints have made us familiar. Indeed those houses had been cleared away in



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1758, and the form of the structure materially altered by the substitution of a large central arch, for the middle pier and two smaller arches which were originally there.

Sometimes the state of the tide prevented Pip from rowing up river again; and then he was accustomed to leave his boat at the Custom House<sup>1</sup> to be brought up afterwards to Temple Stairs. It was on one of these occasions that having gone to a little theatre, in the river-side region ("it is nowhere now," adds Dickens, so that that too is past identification), where Wopsle was acting, he learns from that worthy that he, Pip, is being shadowed, and by no less formidable a person than Compeyson—Magwitch's fellow ex-convict and implacable enemy. To this anxiety was to be added that trap by which Pip falls into the power of Orlick, in the "little sluice-house by the limekiln on the marshes," from which he is rescued by Herbert Pocket and, wonder of wonders, by the immortal Trabb's boy.

It is in Chapter XV. of the third volume (Chapter LIV. of the book as reissued) that the remarkable description of the river occurs, and, at the risk of repeating what most readers of the work will remember, I give one or two extracts.<sup>2</sup> After describing the plan which he and Herbert had formulated, which was to lie about in the boat along the reaches below Gravesend, and there pick up one of the steamers bound for Hamburg or Rotterdam, and get Magwitch safely on board, Pip thus proceeds:

"At that time, the steam-traffic on the Thames was far below its present extent, and watermen's boats were far more numerous. Of barges, sailing colliers, and coasting traders, there were perhaps as many as now; but of steamships, great and small, not a tithe or a twentieth part so

<sup>1</sup> It was then relatively new, having been erected during 1814-1817, on the site of Ripley's structure, which had been destroyed by fire in the former year, and which had replaced Wren's earlier one.

<sup>2</sup> Dickens, it will be recalled, once chartered a steamer and took a party of friends down these lower reaches, in order to familiarise himself with their river-life and landmarks.



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many. Early as it was, there were plenty of scullers going here and there that morning, and plenty of barges dropping down with the tide ; the navigation of the river between bridges, in an open boat, was a much easier and commoner matter in those days than it is in these ; and we went ahead among many skiffs and wherries, briskly.

“ Old London Bridge was soon passed, and old Billingsgate market with its oyster-boats and Dutchmen, and the White Tower and Traitor’s Gate, and we were in among the tiers of shipping. Here, were the Leith, Aberdeen, and Glasgow steamers, loading and unloading goods, and looking immensely high out of the water as we passed alongside ; here, were colliers by the score and score, with the coal-whippers plunging off stages on deck . . . here, at her moorings, was to-morrow’s steamer for Rotterdam, of which we took good notice ; and here to-morrow’s for Hamburg, under whose bowsprit we crossed.”

At Mill Pond Stairs they took Magwitch aboard, and then continued their journey, only stopping to have some rest and refreshment for a short time, on ground which reminded Pip of his own marsh country, so flat and monotonous was it, and with such a dim horizon ; while the “ river turned and turned, and the great floating buoys upon it turned and turned, and everything else seemed stranded and still. For now the last of the fleet of ships was round the last low point we had headed ; and the last green barge, straw-laden, with a brown sail, had followed ; and some ballast-lighters, shaped like a child’s first rude imitation of a boat, lay low in the mud ; and a little squat shoal-lighthouse on open piles, stood crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches.”

The boat with its load of hopes and fears has carried us away from the rush and turmoil of London ; and there is no necessity for us here to follow in its wake, until it is hailed by the Custom House officials ; until Compeyson goes down struggling with Magwitch locked in his arms ; until Magwitch emerges ; until, once more tried and convicted, he dies before his second ordeal can begin. For our purpose here

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the book closes on those wonderful river-scenes which are described with such particularity ; with that still greater atmospheric effect by which Dickens could bring before our mind's eye the life of yesterday and the things done long ago, through the alembic of his astonishing powers.

## XIV

### OUR MUTUAL FRIEND (1864-1865)

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND was Dickens's penultimate novel ; and although in some respects it falls short of *Great Expectations*, and certainly cannot be regarded as among its author's masterpieces, at the same time there is so much in it that is excellent ; so much that no one but Dickens could have written ; its characters are so varied and well-sustained ; that it is a book which one can read again and again with increasing pleasure and admiration. It possesses, too, a great advantage over some of the earlier works which are actually greater artistic triumphs : it was not written with an obvious purpose. Indeed it seems to me that, in company with *Great Expectations* and the unfinished *Edwin Drood*, it partakes more of the novel proper than anything Dickens wrote. The difficulty of having a hero who is weighted with all sorts of *aliases* makes for a certain confusion which some readers find in the work—a confusion worse confounded by Mr Boffin's mysterious proceedings, leaving one continually in doubt as to what he is "up to," as Henry James might have phrased it. And it is only the moral certainty that he is so indubitably up to something, that preserves the reader's interest in one who might otherwise become (as, indeed, he is so frequently on the point of becoming) a bore. But one can afford to suffer him gladly, if for no other reason than for those tremendous Veneerings, and that masterly portrait of a gentleman (who said Dickens could not draw one ?) Twemlow. One can never, I think, walk down Duke Street, St James's, without recalling to mind that gentle piece of dinner-furniture, who lived over a livery stable there, and whose mind there, and in the cold gloom of St James's Square, favourable to meditation, was continually



LIMEHOUSE REACH  
FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY T. R. WAY





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exercised as to whether he was or not the Veneerings's oldest acquaintance.

The London topography of *Our Mutual Friend* begins, however, far from this street of fashionable lodging-houses ; so far, indeed, as the district of Shadwell, Ratchiff, Wapping, Limehouse, and Rotherhithe. Here on the river, "between Southwark Bridge,<sup>1</sup> which is of iron, and London Bridge, which is of stone," floats a boat in which are Gaffer Hexam and his daughter Lizzie ; the former intent on the unsavoury occupation of looking out for dead bodies : "at every mooring chain and rope, at every stationary boat or barge that split the current into a broad arrow-head, at the offsets from the piers of Southwark Bridge, at the paddles of the river steamboats as they beat the filthy water, at the floating logs of timber lashed together lying off certain wharfs, his shining eyes darted a hungry look."

He is in luck, to-day, and hitching his quarry to the boat (Lizzie hiding her eyes and shrinking as far as may be from its proximity) he pulls for the shore, casting, as he does so, some short and surly words at his one-time partner, Rogue Riderhood, who, out on the same quest, has dropped alongside.

From these Thames reaches to the Veneerings's town house is as far as it is to Duke Street ; indeed farther, for that bran-new couple live somewhere—in a new mansion with new furniture, and new servants—in a part designated Stucconia, which sufficiently distinguishes it as being among that congeries of quasi-fashionable abodes to the west of Portman Square, known as "Tyburnia" in those days. One may select any of the better streets and squares in this quarter as a probable *locale* not only for the Veneerings's residence, but also for that of their pompous friend Podsnap, who, we are expressly told, dwelt "in a shady angle adjoining Portman Square"—perhaps in Seymour Street, where

<sup>1</sup> Southwark Bridge has been rebuilt, within the last few years ; the one Dickens indicates was that designed by Sir John Rennie, and opened in 1819 ; being made free of tolls in 1866.

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Campbell the poet once lived, and, earlier, Paoli, of Corsican fame.

At the first dinner recorded at the Veneerings's we meet a number of people whom we are to know intimately before the close of the book : the awful Lady Tippins, who lives "over a staymaker's in the Belgravian borders, with a life-size model, in the window on the ground floor, of a distinguished beauty in a blue petticoat," which I always imagine to be in Halkin Street ; and Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer Lightwood, and the rest.

Mortimer occupies chambers in the Temple. These chambers must have been where Goldsmith Buildings raises its rather incongruous architectural head to-day, for we know that, in Mortimer's own words, their "awful staircase" commanded a burial-ground, and are elsewhere told that that burial-ground was the churchyard attached to the Temple Church. Eugene's offices, which he has in common with three others, consist of a "black hole called a set of chambers"—close by evidently, but not more specifically described.

It is not thither, however, that the friends go from the Veneerings's feast, but in a cab, under the guidance of young Hexam, in order to identify the body which has been found by Gaffer Hexam in the river : "The wheels rolled on, and rolled down by the Monument, and by the Tower, and by the Docks ; down by Ratcliff, and by Rotherhithe ; down by where accumulated scum of humanity seemed to be washed from higher grounds, like so much moral sewage, and to be pausing until its own weight forced it over the bank and sunk it in the river." Getting out of the cab to walk the rest of the way, they come to a low building which "had the look of having once been a mill. There was a rotten wart of wood upon its forehead that seemed to indicate where the sails had been." This was Hexam's abode, probably near Limehouse Pier, at the river end of Park Street. Thence the party proceed to the police station, "winding through some muddy alleys, that might have been deposited by the last ill-savoured

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tide," where a wicket-gate and a bright light told them that they had arrived at their destination. In a cool grot at the end of the yard they see the sight's self. This done they go their several ways : the two friends back to the west, Hexam "into a red-curtained tavern, that stood dropsically bulging over the causeway, 'for a half a pint.'"

This tavern was the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, which bulks somewhat largely in the story. We shall come to it again ; but it must here be described in Dickens's own words : "In its whole constitution it had not a straight floor, and hardly a straight line. . . . Externally, it was a narrow lopsided wooden jumble of corpulent windows heaped one upon another . . . with a crazy wooden veranda impending over the water ; indeed, the whole house, inclusive of the complaining flagstaff on the roof, impended over the water." As to its interior, it was so exiguous that the available space in the bar "was not much larger than a hackney-coach . . . that space was so girt in by corpulent little casks, and by cordial-bottles radiant with fictitious grapes in bunches, and by lemons in nets, and by biscuits in baskets, and by the polite beer-pulls that made low bows when customers were served with beer, and by the cheese in a snug corner, and by the landlady's own small table in a snugger corner near the fire, with the cloth everlastingly laid. This haven was divided from the rough world by a glass partition, and a half door, with a leaden sill upon it for the convenience of resting your liquor."

The tavern was kept by Miss Abbey Potterson, and was frequented by Hexam and Riderhood and other "river-side characters," who lived, as did the Rogue, in Limehouse Hole or its immediate neighbourhood. No such sign is in existence ; but there were not a few houses of this kind in that part of London which might well have stood as its model. The most likely has generally been considered the Grapes Inn, at No. 76 Narrow Street, a thoroughfare immediately abutting on the river, and a continuation of High Street, Shadwell ; although the reader would have some



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difficulty in to-day discovering a prototype of such a tavern as Dickens had in his eye when he described the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters. Here the inquest on the body (described as that of Mr John Harmon) was held, and the reward for the apprehension of the murderer, no doubt, duly posted up in the little bar no bigger than a hackney-coach.

The Veneerings are indirectly connected with the next London locality we meet with—namely, Holloway; for there lives Reginald Wilfer, a clerk in the drug-house of Chicksey, Veneering & Stobbles, in Mincing Lane, and with him his wife and daughters. Thither comes, as a prospective lodger, the hero with one of his *aliases* full upon him. Wilfer's home, we are told, "was in the Holloway region north of London, and then divided from it by fields and trees. Between Battle Bridge and that part of the Holloway district in which he dwelt was a tract of suburban Sahara, where tiles and bricks were burnt, bones were boiled, carpets were beat, rubbish was shot, dogs were fought, and dust was heaped by contractors." So rural was this part about the middle of the last century, that plans of London do not include it in their area, and it was really the great building development of the second half of that period which made it an integral part of the metropolis. Where exactly Mr Wilfer's house was situated it is impossible to say, but in any case, it was probably not far from Boffin's Bower, to which we are introduced in the next (fifth) chapter; the nearest direction to which was, in the words of Mr Boffin's instructions to Silas Wegg: "If you should meet with anybody that don't know it by that name, when you've got nigh upon about a odd mile, or say and a quarter if you like, up Maiden Lane, Battle Bridge, ask for Harmony Gaol, and you'll be put right." In those days Maiden Lane, now represented by York Road, was a narrow country lane, not unpicturesque at its northern extremity. The mention of dust contractors, in the description of the Wilfer neighbourhood, is significant, in connection with Mr Boffin and his monumental dust heaps.

It was not far from Cavendish Square that that ruffianly

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humbug, Silas Wegg, kept his stall ; before “ Our House ” as he called the opposite mansion. In Marcus Stone’s illustration to Chapter VII. of Book II. of the novel a sort of vague indication of the building is given, by which it would appear (if an actual house is indicated, which was probably the case) that it was one of considerable size, with a large projecting portico supported by pillars. That house, which in Wegg’s imaginative mind sheltered Miss Elizabeth, Master George, Aunt Jane and Uncle Parker, was, later, to become the residence of the Boffins, and, later still, of Mr and Mrs John Harmon.

But Wegg has now better employment than such day-dreams, or the superintendence of “ the hardest little stall of all the sterile little stalls in London ”—namely, in reading to Mr Boffin from that very recondite work known to “ a literary man—*with* a wooden leg,” as *The Decline and Fall off the Rooshan Empire*, and it is on his way to fulfil this very profitable duty that, going towards Battle Bridge, by way of Clerkenwell, he makes a call on a friend—Mr Venus, the taxidermist. The shop of this worthy was in a narrow and a dirty street, and was itself small, dark and greasy. As we know on Forster’s authority, such a shop as this was brought to the novelist’s notice by Marcus Stone ; but whereas the original was in St Giles’s, Dickens transferred it to Clerkenwell. A good deal of intimate talk goes on between Venus and Wegg in this little shop, whose interior is reproduced by the pencil of Marcus Stone ; what time an equally confidential conversation takes place between Mr Boffin and Lightwood in the Temple, in the course of which the former refers to an earlier meeting between them at a place “ under the little archway in St Paul’s Churchyard,” to which he applies the remarkable and phonetic name of Doctor Scommons. Leaving the Temple, Mr Boffin is accosted by Harmon, who gives his name as Rokesmith, and suggests having a few words with him in Clifford’s Inn, which they happen to be near, next to St Dunstan’s Church, in Fleet Street, now so largely built over as to be but dimly

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recognisable from its old self, but for the few quaint old houses still left in it.

It is not often that one can say with certainty in what London churches the marriages of Dickens's characters take place; generally indeed one has to make a guess, guided thereto by a sort of topographical instinct. In the case of the Lammles's wedding, however, we are told, without any attempt at mystification, that it was at St James's, Piccadilly, before the exquisite woodwork of the altar, by Grinling Gibbons, that Sophronia Akershem was linked in wedlock to Alfred Lammle, of Sackville Street, and surely the organ of James II. never pealed out the Wedding March on a more ill-assorted pair. There is as much pomp and circumstance about the ceremony as the Veneerings can possibly contrive; and one cannot but perceive the hand of those bran-new worthies in the list of callers on Mr and Mrs Boffin, in *their* new mansion (really almost a sort of funded property in the possession of Silas Wegg) off Cavendish Square, including Mrs Tapkins who is "At Home, Wednesdays, music, Portland Place."

With Book II. we are introduced to the school at which Charley Hexam first learned from a book in "a miserable loft in an unsavoury yard," whence, by dint of sharpness and industry, he passed to a better, then newly built, "down in that district of the flat country tending to the Thames, where Kent and Surrey meet, and where the railways still bestride the market gardens that will soon die under them," by which we may take it that the Old Kent Road and New Cross Road neighbourhood is indicated, through which the South-Eastern Railway wends its way towards the hop-gardens.

On this occasion Charley Hexam accompanies Bradley Headstone, the schoolmaster, to see Lizzie, who is lodging temporarily with Jenny Wren (the Doll's Dressmaker). With this object they came to the "Surrey side of Westminster Bridge, and crossed the bridge, and made along the



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Middlesex shore towards Millbank. In this region are a certain little street called Church Street,<sup>1</sup> and a certain little blind square, called Smith Square, in the centre of which last retreat is a very hideous church with four towers at the four corners, generally resembling some petrified monster, frightful and gigantic, on its back with its legs in the air. They found a tree near by in a corner, and a blacksmith's forge, and a timber-yard, and a dealer's in old iron. . . . After making a round of this place . . . they stopped at the point where the street and the square joined, and where there were some little quiet houses in a row. To these Charley Hexam finally led the way, and at one of these stopped." Here Jenny Wren and her miserable old father, called Mr Dolls by Eugene Wrayburn, lived, and here Lizzie was lodging. Smith Square has recently been undergoing a complete transformation; whole sides of it have been demolished; new and picturesque houses have taken the place of houses which were picturesque and old; fashion has penetrated its recesses and, indeed, this quarter has changed out of all knowledge, both architecturally and socially; only Archer's Church remains bearing upon its heavy outlines the scorn of Dickens and the earlier ridicule of Lord Chesterfield.

From the precincts of Westminster to a successful attempt to scale that fastness is an easy transition, and we are soon *assisting*, in the French sense of the word, at those heroic efforts on the part of Twemlow and Lady Tippins, and Boots and Brewer, which land Veneering within the House of Commons ("the best club in London," Twemlow calls it) as member for Somewhere. Everyone works: Twemlow never leaving his club; Boots and Brewer racing about London in hansoms to nowhere in particular; Lady Tippins using Mrs Veneering's brougham for all she is worth; it is a great day, inaugurated and crowned by those feasts which are so resplendent in the Veneering household, and over which the Analytical chemist broods sardonically.

Alfred Lammle's house in Sackville Street served as a

<sup>1</sup> Church Street is now Dean Stanley Street—what there is of it left.



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temporary nest for those love-birds, himself and his wife ; they were always looking out, or said they were, for some palatial residence in the best situation ; always, indeed, very nearly taking or buying one, but never quite concluding the bargain. Therefore they still continued to live in Sackville Street where “ the handsome fittings and furnishings of the house were piled thick and high over the skeleton upstairs ” in the cupboard, and the room with a billiard-table in it —on the ground floor, eating out a backyard, notably “ Mr Lammle’s room,” was frequented by mysterious, too slangy, too odorous of cigars, and too much given to horse-flesh gentlemen, of whom it was not at all clear whether they came on business or pleasure.

One who may be said, in a limited sense, to have come on both, was the egregious Fledgeby, whom we first meet there, making one of the party of four, the Lammles themselves and Georgiana Podsnap being the others, to dinner with the prospect of the Opera afterwards. Fledgeby lives on the second floor in Albany, that little backwater out of Piccadilly full of so many literary memories, which had been built by Chambers for the 1st Lord Holland, had once belonged to Lord Melbourne, and later to the Duke of York and Albany (hence its name), and in whose chambers had lived Macaulay and Lytton, Byron and Canning, and so many other notable men. One cannot but think that Fledgeby must have been sadly out of place in such an environment ; but in spite of his insignificance he “ maintained a spruce appearance,” and so passed, one supposes, among his betters.

But Fledgeby was not a mere idle young man about town : he was the backbone of a certain business in the City, in whose counting-house “ were light boxes on shelves . . . and strings of mock beads hanging up . . . samples of cheap clocks, and samples of cheap vases of flowers. Foreign toys, all.” This was superintended by old Riah, the Jew, who had a little garden on the roof, and was situated in St Mary Axe, in “ a yellow, overhanging, plaster-fronted house.” Later on in the book Dickens gives us a description of the locality

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enveloped in one of those fogs which he is so fond of introducing into his stories, and which perhaps give a more characteristic quality to his City pictures than anything else :

“ It was a foggy day in London,” he writes, “ and the fog was heavy and dark. Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing, and choking ; inanimate London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither. Gas-lights flared in the shops with a haggard and unblessed air, as knowing themselves to be night creatures that had no business abroad under the sun ; while the sun itself, when it was for a few moments dimly indicated through circling eddies of fog, showed as if it had gone out, and were collapsing flat and cold. Even in the surrounding country it was a foggy day, but there the fog was grey, whereas in London it was, at about the boundary-line, dark yellow, and a little within it brown, and then browner, and then browner, until at the heart of the City—which call St Mary Axe—it was rusty black. . . . At nine o'clock, on such a morning, the place of business of Pubsey and Co. was not the liveliest object even in St Mary Axe—which is not a very lively spot—with a sobbing gas-light in the counting-house window, and a burglarious stream of fog creeping in to strangle it through the keyhole of the main door.”

The London localities mentioned in the succeeding chapters have already been referred to : the chambers in the Temple ; Mr Boffin's residence ; the offices of Chicksey, Veneering & Co., in Mincing Lane, whence the innocent elopement of Bella and “ the Cherub ” takes place ; and the rest. The Children's Hospital, whether little Johnny is taken under the care of Rokesmith, and whence he sends his last legacy, “ a kiss for the Boofer lady,” was, one likes to think, although the fact is not actually stated, that establishment in Great Ormond Street whose picturesque front and iron-work recall, amid much that is new, the days of Anne and the earlier Georges, and the memory of young Denis Duval

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arriving there on a visit to Sir Peter Denis from distant Winchelsea.

It is a far cry from here to Limehouse Hole, where we have before been, and where Rogue Riderhood dwelt "deep and dark . . . among the riggers, and the mast, oar and block makers, and the boat-builders, and the sail-lofts, as in a kind of ship's hold stored full of water-side characters." Here his daughter, Pleasant, was a sort of pawnbroker—or pawn-brokeress, I suppose one should say—on a small scale; likewise she kept what was described on the inscription in the shop's window as a Seaman's Boarding House. Thither on a certain cold windy evening came a man, Rokesmith, disguised as a sailor, seeking the Rogue himself—we all know for what purpose. It was on this occasion, as he took his way back past Limehouse Church, that "at the great iron gate of the churchyard he stopped and looked in. He looked up at the high tower . . . and he looked round at the white tombstones" and ran over in his mind his amazing experiences.

Later on we get one of those little atmospheric pictures of London which are in Dickens's books, even more suggestive than where he gives us actual descriptions. It occurs in Chapter XV. of Book II. ; and is connected with the meeting of Lizzie and her brother and Bradley Headstone, when Charley shows himself in his true egotistical colours, and the harassed girl is subsequently comforted by old Riah. "A grey, dusty, withered evening in London city," says Dickens, "has not a hopeful aspect. The closed warehouses and offices have . . . an air of mourning. The towers and steeples of the many house-encompassed churches, dark and dingy as the sky that seems descending on them, are no relief to the general gloom; a sun-dial on a church wall has the look, in its useless black shade, of having failed in its business enterprise, and stopped payment for ever; melancholy waifs and strays of housekeepers and porters sweep melancholy waifs and strays of papers and pins into the kennels, and other more melancholy waifs and strays explore them, searching and stooping and poking for anything to sell. The set of



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humanity outward from the City is a set of prisoners departing from gaol, and dismal Newgate seems quite as fit a stronghold for the mighty Lord Mayor as his own state dwelling. . . . On such an evening . . . the schoolmaster and his pupil emerged upon the Leadenhall Street region, spying eastward for Lizzie."

They enter a churchyard through a court—"a paved square court, with a raised bank of earth, about breast high, in the middle, enclosed by iron rails." It is not easy to say what church this is. Had the description fitted, it should have been St Botolph's, Aldgate; but unfortunately it does not. Dickens may have had that edifice, or St Andrew Undershaft, in his mind, however, and, as was not infrequently common with him, have purposely added some features which the exterior of both these places lacked.

I often wonder what business or pleasure took Riah to the other side of the river on that occasion when, again on a foggy evening, he sets out for Smith Square, and instead of going as the crow flies, as one would naturally have expected him to do, crossed London Bridge and reached his destination by coming back over Westminster Bridge; as roundabout a way as he could well have chosen. On the other hand, we know what takes Jenny Wren to a Drawing Room, or a grand day in the Park, or a show or fête of any kind, because she tells us how she makes the ladies of fashion pose unconsciously for her dolls' dresses, and even Lady Belinda White-rose has, so to speak, to try on a dress, and to take pains about it too, between the doorstep and her waiting carriage; what time Bella accompanies Mr Boffin in his search among the London second-hand book-shops for literature dealing with notable misers, and Mr Wegg matures his nefarious plans. What time, too, still more nefarious imaginings are going on in the brain of Bradley Headstone, who is in a dangerous, even murderous, mood as he hangs about the Temple and its precincts and dogs the every step of his rival, Eugene Wrayburn.

While Bella goes to see her father in Mincing Lane, with



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the sensation, on arriving in that haunt of spices and colonial produce, of having just opened a drawer in a chemist's shop ; the Lammles have come on bad times, for there is, to the astonishment of their acquaintances, a bill of sale on the rich furniture in Sackville Street, and what is more, it has to be realised, to satisfy creditors who refuse longer to live on hope, and payment, deferred. In every sense that alliance, preluded with such pomp and ancientry, in St James's, Piccadilly, has been a dismal failure—as, indeed, it deserved to be. Very different is another marriage which takes place about this time, between Rokesmith and Bella who carries off the Cherub, by steamboat to Greenwich where the informal breakfast of three is given in the room overlooking the river and its forest of shipping. In the higher reaches of that river, among the rushes, and startling the wild-fowl, Bradley Headstone makes his murderous assault on Eugene, who lies at death's door at the little inn at Henley, by the bridge. It is, too, on the river at Plashwater Weir-Mill Lock, generally identified as Hurley Lock, that the schoolmaster and Rogue Riderhood go down together in a deadly embrace.

But it does not require a journey out of London to realise that poetic justice is duly meted out to the villains and negligible characters of the plot. Even Fledgeby gets as much as he deserves, at the hands of Lammle (the gods use strange instruments to accomplish their ends), in his rooms in Albany, and Pubsey's comes to its destined termination. Mr Dolls is run over, after bivouacking in Covent Garden, and making one last effort to obtain the rum of his undoing ; and the egregious Wegg finds an avenging spirit in Venus, whom he fondly hoped to make an accomplice in his ingratitude ; and so goes out of the story, Sloppy being for much in the transaction, amid the refuse of a scavenger's cart.

Of all the London scenes in *Our Mutual Friend*, what one likes most to dwell on, is that occasion when Bella calls for her father, in the Boffins's yellow chariot, and takes him to dine at Greenwich, he mildly suggesting “that perhaps it might attract attention, having one's hair publicly done by a

## OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

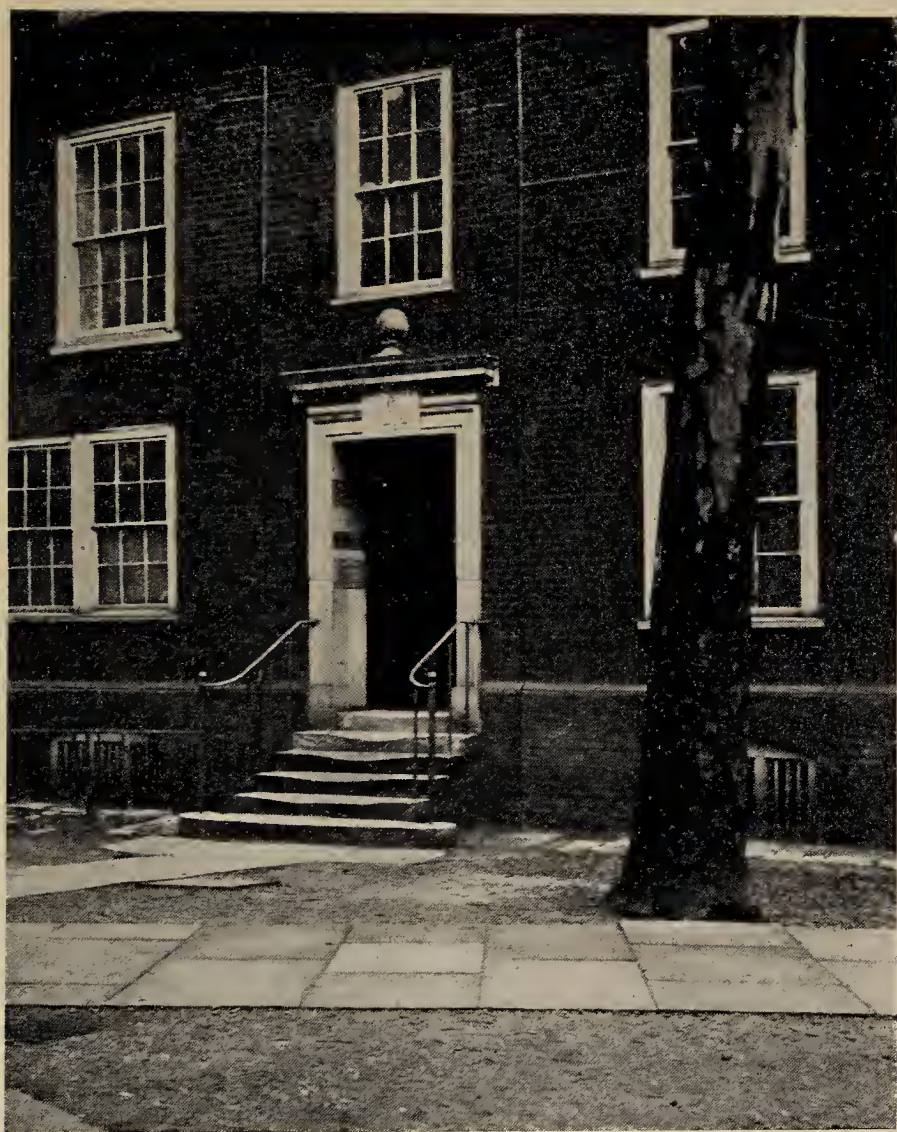
lovely woman in an elegant turn-out in Fenchurch Street," and when he goes to get himself a new outfit, and she asks him where she can await him in a quiet place, he proposes, "near the garden, up by the Trinity House on Tower Hill." Even the grimness of the adjacent fortress, and the commercial surroundings of that busy quarter, take on an air of holiday, and are made for once bright by the presence of beauty and love.

## XV

### EDWIN DROOD (1870)

UNFINISHED books are in a class by themselves. They cannot be criticised, except so far as the style and promise of the completed portion may give evidence of what the whole might reasonably be supposed to fulfil. But when the fragment has been cut short by death a pathetic interest attaches to it and might easily bias the critic's judgment in a favourable channel. It is, however, a not unremarkable fact that the three outstanding unfinished novels in British literature—*Denis Duval*, *Edwin Drood*, and *Weir of Hermiston* (*St Ives* might well be added)—have shown undeniable proof that their writers, so far from having exhausted the golden lode of their genius, have kept to their greatest level of achievement, and, as I am inclined to think is the case with Dickens, have even risen to heights to which they had not before attained. For there is a maturity, a restraint, a mastery of style, in *Edwin Drood*, which places it, fragment as it is, among its writer's major productions; and had it reached completion, I believe it would have taken its place among the three or four books which are outstanding even in his marvellous output.

Rising from another reading of the half-dozen parts which were all that envious Death allowed him to finish, the chief topographical impression (which is here our subject) left on the mind is that of Rochester's Cathedral Tower, and the hopes and fears and mystery that congregated around it and its Gate House and its Minor Canon Row. It mixes with our thoughts as it did with those opium-tainted visions of Jasper as he lay on the broken-down bed in the squalid den of the far East End. "He is in the meanest and closest of small rooms," when we first see him. "Through the ragged



STAPLE INN  
MR. GREWGIOUS'S DOOR  
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY L. M. LAUER





## EDWIN DROOD

window-curtain, the light of day steals in from a miserable court. He lies, dressed, across a large unseemly bed, upon a bedstead that has indeed given way under the weight upon it. Lying, also dressed and also across the bed, not longwise, are a Chinaman, a Lascar, and a haggard woman. The first two are in a sleep or stupor ; the last is blowing at a kind of pipe, to kindle it."

This is the place whither Jasper has come from his hotel in Falcon Square, and to reach which he has trudged "eastward and still eastward through the stale streets" until he attained his quest in "a miserable court, specially miserable among many such."

The actual position of the opium den has never been satisfactorily discovered, but a suggestion has been made (by Mr Dexter) that it was situated in New Court, Victoria Street, E., near St George's Church. Dickens once made an expedition with J. T. Fields to such a place as he describes, and his companion has placed it on record that they heard a wretched old woman croon the very words used in the first chapter.

So much of the story passes at Rochester, where we meet Rosa Bud at the Nuns' House (Miss Twinkleton's), Crisparkle, in Minor Canon Row, and Jasper and the Landlesses and Edwin himself in the Cathedral precincts, to say nothing of that solemn ass, Sapsea, and Tope and Durdles, that it is not till we reach Chapter XI. that we get again to London. This time, it is no farther east than Holborn, the actual spot being Staple Inn, where Mr Grewgious has his offices, at No. 10.

"Behind the most ancient part of Holborn, London, where certain gabled houses some centuries of age still stand looking on the public way, as if disconsolately looking for the Old Bourne that has long run dry, is a little nook composed of two irregular quadrangles, called Staple Inn. It is one of those nooks, the turning into which out of the clashing street, imparts to the relieved pedestrian the sensation of having put cotton in his ears, and velvet soles on his boots. It is one of those nooks where a few smoky sparrows twitter

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in smoky trees, as though they called to one another, 'Let us play at country,' and where a few feet of garden-mould and a few yards of gravel enable them to do that refreshing violence to their tiny understandings. Moreover, it is one of those nooks which are legal nooks; and it contains a little Hall, with a little lantern in its roof: to what obstructive purposes devoted, and at whose expense, this history knoweth not." Nor does Sir George Buc, in his treatise attached to Howes's edition of Stow, seem to be better informed, for all he can tell us is that "the gentlemen of this House (Staple Inn) have bestowed great costs in new building a fayre Hall of brick, and two parts of the outward Courtyards, besides other lodging in the garden and elsewhere, and have thereby made it the fayrest Inne of Chauncery." In 1529 the Inn was purchased by the Benchers of Gray's Inn; in 1884 it was sold to the Prudential Assurance Company, which restored the picturesque Holborn frontage by cleaning off the plaster that had for years hidden the timber joists. Mr Grewgious's Chambers were those in a corner house in the little inner quadrangle, presenting in black and white over its ugly portal the mysterious inscription:

P  
J     T  
1747

These initials, which Dickens facetiously suggests might mean "Perhaps John Thomas," or "Perhaps Joe Taylor," were really those of Principal John Thomson, who was the president of the Inn for two terms in the year 1747. Here Grewgious dwelt with his clerk Bazzard. His room was not luxurious, being filled with an orderly array of strong boxes, files of correspondence, many account-books, an easy-chair, and an old-fashioned round table drawn out after business hours, representing the nearest approach to comfort it ever attained. Mr Grewgious's bedroom was across the landing; an outer room was sacred to Mr Bazzard. Every day Mr Grewgious crossed Holborn to partake of dinner at the hotel

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in Furnival's Inn—this being Wood's Hotel, which was actually within the archway of the Inn, and not the hostelry next door, No. 133 High Holborn, known as the Bell and Crown. It was to Wood's Hotel that the lawyer takes Rosa Bud when she unexpectedly turns up at his office, after Jasper has terrified her by his declaration of love in the gardens of Miss Twinkleton's establishment. "You shall have," he tells her, "the prettiest chamber in Furnival's," and indeed it proved to be "airy, clean, comfortable, almost gay," and the "Unlimited" head chambermaid took as much care of her charge as even Mr Grewgious could have desired.

But I anticipate. Before Rosa Bud makes her appearance in Staple Inn or Furnival's, Mr Crisparkle has visited the former, not to see Mr Grewgious, but Neville Landless, who has a room there up many a creaking stair in an attic. This is the reverend gentleman's second visit in London that morning, for he has already been to interview the preposterous Honeythunder, whose activities (philanthropic and otherwise) were so characteristic of that blatant personage. After seeing Landless, Crisparkle crosses the little square to the doorway with its three initials and date. From Mr Grewgious's room he sees (his host directing his attention) a "shrinking individual" at the second-floor landing window of the house in which Landless is lodging—the baleful figure of Jasper himself, up to no good we may be sure, in the neighbourhood of one on whom he wishes to fix the murder of Edwin Drood. A pleasanter neighbour is that strange person Mr Tartar, whose rooms are adjacent to Landless's, and who enters and leaves them by a sort of gymnastic treatment of water-pipes and ledges, easy enough to the old sailor he was, but terrifying in its audacity to a mere landsman.

Tartar's rooms, which were the top set in the house next the top set in the corner, "were the neatest, cleanest, and best-ordered chambers ever seen under the sun, moon, and stars. Every inch of brass-work in Mr Tartar's possession was



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polished and burnished, till it shone like a brazen mirror. No man-of-war was ever kept more spick and span from careless touch. There he had his flower-garden with a neat awning rigged over it—the Magic Beanstalk Country.” Mr Grewgious often had his eye on Landless’s chambers from the drawn-back blind of his own, but luckily he did not witness Tartar’s gymnastic exercises, or “this remarkable appearance and disappearance might have broken his rest as a phenomenon.”

When the idea of taking a furnished lodging for Rosa Bud, and inviting Miss Twinkleton to assume the charge of the young lady for a period, presents itself to Mr Grewgious, he and Rosa set out to seek for such accommodation. But “as Mr Grewgious’s idea of looking at a furnished lodging was to get on the opposite side of the street to a house with a suitable bill in the window, and stare at it; and then work his way tortuously to the back of the house, and stare at that; and then not go in, but make similar trials of another house, with the same result; their progress was but slow.” At last he remembers that a widowed cousin of Bazzard lets lodgings in Southampton Street, Bloomsbury Square, and so off they go to find Mrs Billickin (the lady in question), who, one may note parenthetically, is in her way almost as great a creation as Mrs Gamp or Mrs Lirriper.

Mrs Billickin, after having presented in due course all the shortcomings of her premises, which she reminds her visitors “is not Bond Street nor yet St James’s Palace,” and having further informed them that “the Arching leads to a Mews,” and that “Dogs is not viewed with faviour,” for “besides litter, they gets stole, and sharing suspicions is apt to creep in, and unpleasantness takes place,” finally agrees to receive Miss Rosa as a lodger; affixing to the agreement, drawn up there and then by Mr Grewgious, “in a baronial way, the sign-manual ‘Billickin.’”

Returning from this quest they meet Mr Tartar who, it being a fine day, suggests an expedition up the river, he having a boat at Temple Stairs. They must have gone a

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considerable way, for Marcus Stone's illustration to this incident shows us old Putney Bridge with the church tower flanking it. This was the last of the old wooden bridges spanning the Thames, which had been completed in 1729, and was removed so relatively recently as 1886. "The tide," we are told, "bore them on in the gayest and most sparkling manner, until they stopped to dine in some everlastingly green gardens, needing no matter-of-fact identification here"; probably Cremorne. As Dickens intended, it is said, to make Tartar and Rosa husband and wife, it is pleasant to leave them thus on the river's flood which was to bear them to such good fortune.

One would like, indeed, to close the book at this point, but I am constrained to note that Jasper, whom we met at the opening of the novel in the Shadwell opium den, goes again there at the end of what we have of it; and for that purpose repairs, first, on foot "to a hybrid hotel in a little square behind Aldersgate Street, near the General Post Office." This is the hotel, I imagine, mentioned by Dickens in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, and where we have before met him—in Falcon Square. There "he eats without appetite, and soon sets forth again. Eastward he takes his miserable way to seek oblivion in the drug of his predilection; and so he goes from the story; or rather with it his career ceases on a shameful note.

## XVI

### THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER (1861)

IN the case of such a collection of papers on all sorts of subjects and dealing with all sorts of phases of life as that which Dickens published under the general title of *The Uncommercial Traveller*, it is obvious that topographical allusions will crop up in every chapter and in every connection. So varied are these, indeed, that I am not sure that the book ought not to be considered under the heading of the author's more important works ; at least for our present purpose. But after all, it is not a novel, as the other long productions are, and so, in spite of its date, shall be placed after them, and before its author's *opuscula*, which will be considered in the following chapter.

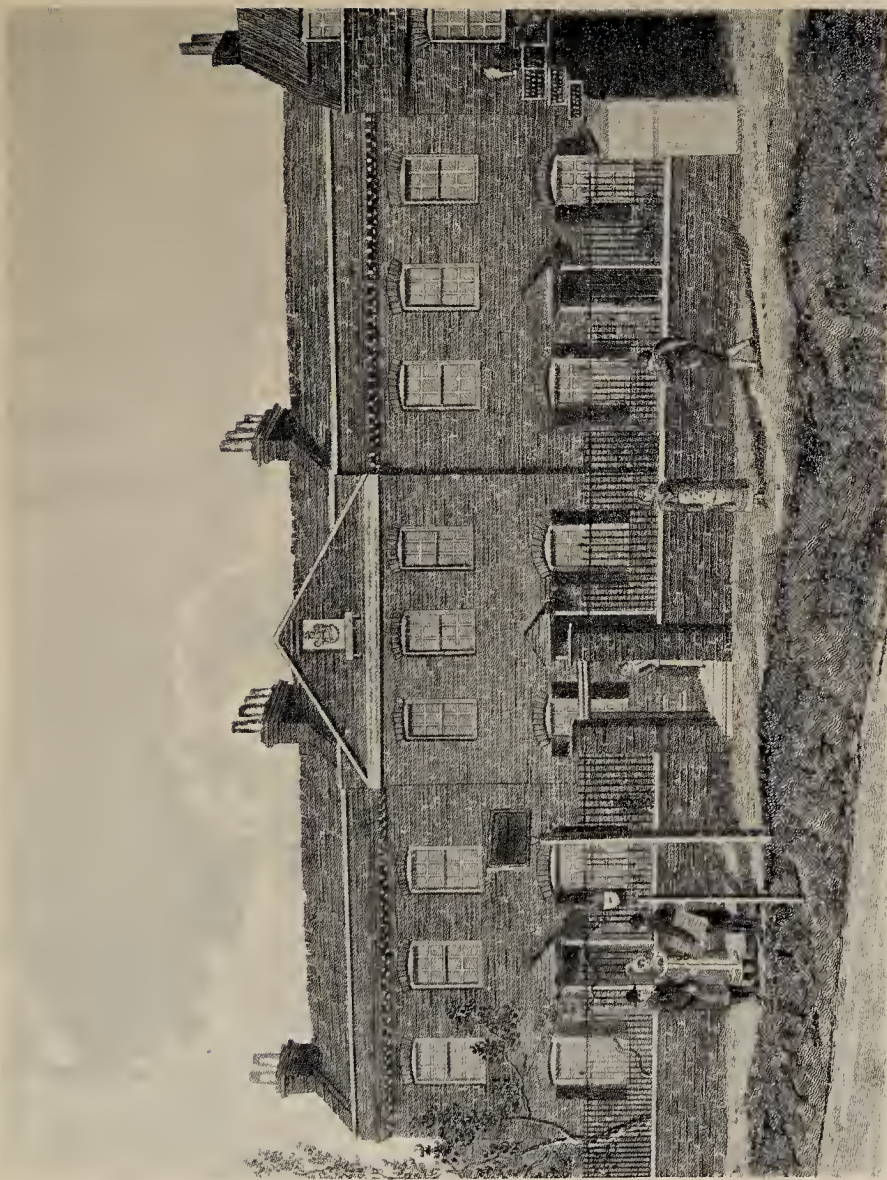
These detached papers were first printed in *All the Year Round*. Subsequently the first series of them was issued in book form in 1861 ; a cheap edition, containing eleven more papers, which had also appeared in *All the Year Round* during 1863, being published in 1865. This accounts for twenty-eight papers ; but in the Illustrated Library Edition (1875) a further instalment of eight papers was added, making in all thirty-six.<sup>1</sup>

Although there are general references to London in nearly all the "Uncommercial" papers, I shall here confine myself to noting such as have a more or less special interest for us in this connection.

To begin with then, we know that the Uncommercial Traveller has his rooms in Covent Garden, for we are told so on the first page of the book, and that from that *point d'appui* he is "always wandering here and there—now about

<sup>1</sup> For further bibliographical details, see the late Mr Kitton's excellent little book on the *Minor Writings of Charles Dickens*.





MEGGS' ALMSHOUSES, WHITECHAPEL  
FROM A PRINT BY SCHNEEBELJE





## THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

the city streets : now about the country by-roads—seeing many little things, and some great things.” One of the first things he sees, for he goes specially to visit it, is Wapping Workhouse. Dr Johnson once recommended Boswell “to explore Wapping,” which the obedient Scotsman did, although he has to record disappointment as a result. To-day everything, or nearly everything, is changed there ; but the workhouse stood south of Raine’s Hospital, and to the north-east of St George’s Church, near where the Commercial Road now runs.

Dickens (or the Uncommercial Traveller, which you will), passing the India House, on his way east, could not help thinking of Tippoo-Sahib and Charles Lamb, or patting his little wooden midshipman on the leg<sup>1</sup> ; and thus, by degrees, leaves Aldgate Pump, and the Saracen’s Head, Fenchurch Street, “and strolls up the empty yard of his ancient neighbour the Black or Blue Boar, or Bull.” At last after many wanderings, and having given himself up for lost, he arrived at “a swing-bridge looking down at some dark locks in some dirty water.” Asking a native what this place was called, that worthy replied, “Mr Baker’s Trap”—in other words, a place selected as favourable for suicides, Mr Baker being no other than the Coroner of the district. This spot has been identified as the Old Gravel Lane Bridge, known as the Bridge of Sighs ; it is the property of the East India Docks, and lies immediately south of the church of St George’s in the East, from which it is divided by St George Street.

In the following sketch, “Two Views of a Cheap Theatre,” we are in a very different, although in many respects as it then was a hardly less savoury, neighbourhood ; “Those wonderful houses about Drury Lane Theatre,” says Dickens, “which in the palmy days of theatres were prosperous and long-settled places of business, and which now change hands every week, but never change their character of being divided and subdivided on the ground floor into mouldy dens of shops . . . those Bedouin establishments, deserted

<sup>1</sup> See *Dombey and Son*, concerning this figure outside Sol Gills’s shop.

## THE LONDON OF CHARLES DICKENS

by the tribe, and tenantless"; and he records how he passed the pipe-shop in Great Russell Street, observing everything and wondering to what play-house he should go; and he decides on "the Britannia Theatre at Hoxton, a mile north of St Luke's Hospital in the Old Street Road, London," which he found, for internal arrangements, lighting, atmosphere, far better than Her Majesty's; far superior even to the Royal Italian Opera-House itself.

The Britannia Theatre is situated at 116 Hoxton Street, and had then been but newly rebuilt (1858); it occupies the site of the Britannia Tea Gardens. "This really extraordinary place," writes Dickens, "is the achievement of one man's enterprise, and was erected on the ruins of an inconvenient old building in less than five months, at a round cost of five-and-twenty thousand pounds."

The "City of London Churches" is the subject of the ninth paper, and although one is tempted to quote so much, I must restrict myself to one or two indispensable extracts: "I never wanted to know the names of the churches to which I went," says our Traveller, "and to this hour I am profoundly ignorant in that particular of at least nine-tenths of them. Indeed, saving that I know the church of old Gower's tomb (he lies in effigy with his head upon his books) to be the church of St Saviour's, Southwark; and the church of Milton's tomb to be the church of Cripplegate; and the church on Cornhill with the great golden keys to be the church of Saint Peter; I doubt if I could pass a competitive examination in any of the names." However, arriving in the city by omnibus, on a Sunday morning, he strolls down "one of the many narrow hilly streets that tend due south to the Thames." As he stands at a street corner he sees no fewer than four churches "with their steeples clamouring for people." It is idle speculating as to which church he selected, although one might hazard a guess and be right within three!

On another Sunday he chooses a church "oddly put away in a corner among a number of lanes—a smaller church than

## THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

the last, and an ugly : of about the date of Queen Anne ” ; although the latter statement, with Wren’s work all around, hardly helps one towards identification ; but this church has a gallery and a porch, which facts might prove helpful.

In yet another, certain ritualistic rites were performed, for we are told of “ one obscure church which had broken out in the melodramatic style, and was got up with various tawdry decorations, much after the manner of the extinct London maypoles.” On the other hand, in some places of worship within our Traveller’s knowledge, “ rot and mildew and dead citizens formed the uppermost scent, while, infused into it in a dreamy way not at all displeasing, was the staple character of the neighbourhood. In the churches about Mark Lane, for example, there was a dry whiff of wheat. . . . From Rood Lane to Tower Street,<sup>1</sup> and thereabouts, there was often a subtle flavour of wine ; sometimes, of tea. One church near Mincing Lane [probably St Dunstan in the East, in St Dunstan’s Hill, the continuation of Mincing Lane, is indicated] smelt like a druggist’s drawer. Behind the Monument (St Magnus) the service had a flavour of damaged oranges, which, a little farther down towards the river, tempered into herrings, and gradually toned into a cosmopolitan blast of fish. In one church, the exact counterpart of the church in the *Rake’s Progress*,<sup>2</sup> there was no speciality of atmosphere, until the organ shook a perfume of hides all over us from some adjacent warehouse.”

After all, these old city churches are, to use Dickens’s words, “ worth a Sunday exploration, for they yet echo, not inharmoniously, to the time when the City of London really was London.”

In the chapter (X.) headed “ Shy Neighbourhoods ” we have Dickens’s reflections on the various by-streets into which his uncommercial peregrinations occasionally led him. In these he affects to be acquainted with various dogs which

<sup>1</sup> St Olave’s, Hart Street ; Allhallow’s, Barking, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The actual edifice delineated by Hogarth was old Marylebone Church.



## THE LONDON OF CHARLES DICKENS

haunt their precincts ; here, in a shy lane behind Long Acre ; there, in the intricacies of Covent Garden Market ; or in a remote corner in distant Hammersmith ; or that quadruped who resided with a blind man in Southwark, and to be seen on most days in Oxford Street “ haling the blind man away on expeditions wholly un contemplated by, and unintelligible to, the man.”

One spot mentioned in this chapter is no longer in existence, I mean Burlington House Gardens, between Burlington Arcade and the Albany, whose north wall once offered, we are told, “ a shy spot for appointments among blind men at about two or three o’clock in the afternoon.” Nor was this feature to remain long after Dickens wrote this passage, for that wall was pulled down, and the University of London buildings were erected on its site, during the years 1866-1868, the architect of the new pile being Sir James Pennethorne (I always like to record the names of architects who have improved London ; they are invariably forgotten), who was also responsible for the west wing of Somerset House.

After dogs and blind men, cats ; and Dickens knew, he tells us, “ several small streets of cats, about the Obelisk in Saint George’s Fields, and also in the vicinity of Clerkenwell Green, and also in the back settlements of Drury Lane.” Indeed all sorts of weird and withdrawn localities were penetrated by that observant eye, as its owner walked up and down London so constantly and so rapidly that George Augustus Sala tells us how you never knew where you would meet him ; whether it was in the wilds of Hampstead, or the far-flung distances around the Docks ; in Hornsey, or in Hammersmith.

At the beginning of Chapter XII., which is headed “Dullborough Town” (in this case Chatham), Dickens speaks of himself as being “packed—like game—and forwarded, carriage paid, to the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside.” This was the Cross Keys Inn and Commercial Hotel, situated at Nos. 128-129 Wood Street, only one door from the corner where stood the famous tree among whose

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branches Wordsworth's thrush sang to poor Susan, and then kept by Ann Starr and Son. It was, in 1838, a considerable house, with an arched entrance in the centre leading into its coach-yard.

As might be expected, the paper on "Night Walks" (Chapter XIII.) gives several opportunities for references to London localities; but these are rather of a general than a particular character; atmospheric rather than strictly topographical. It is, however, interesting to learn, on Dickens's showing, that the Haymarket was then, in his opinion, "the worst kept part of London," and we are not a little surprised to read that "about Kent Street in the Borough, and along a portion of the line of the Old Kent Road, the peace was seldom violently broken," especially as we know, on another authority, that till a date considerably later than that of these Commercial papers, "the poor lodging-houses in this street continued to be the most awful receptacles of the houseless in the country—worse than the 'dry arches.'"<sup>1</sup>

During these night wanderings the Traveller goes into all sorts of places—past Newgate, with a glance at the tower of St Sepulchre's, whose bell tolled the dawn of the last awful morning for the condemned lying in the adjacent prison; to Billingsgate, whose raucous cries were for a time stilled; over to the Surrey side, where the King's Bench was so familiar a sight to him as the home of Dry Rot among men under an old bad system of legislation; by Bethlehem Hospital, as the best way back towards Westminster, and because of the thought which its wall presented to him: that "the sane and the insane are equal at night as the sane lie dreaming," where Cibber's "Madness and Melancholy" contorted themselves over the entrance. Back over old Westminster Bridge and by Old Palace Yard, where "the Courts of Law kept me company for a quarter of an hour"; and thus up to Covent Garden, where the bustle of a market

<sup>1</sup> The late Dr Wheatley. Part of this very ancient street, which is mentioned by Stow, is now absorbed in the Great Dover Road.

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morning was "wonderful company," before he turned into his rooms close by.

In "Chambers" (Chapter XIV.) we get glimpses of those "highly suicidal sets of chambers, in a large double house, in Gray's Inn," and elsewhere, which we have met with in the pages of the novels. The particular set with which the paper opens was under the charge of a lady named Sweeney, "in figure extremely like an old family-umbrella: whose dwelling confronts a dead wall in a court off Gray's Inn Lane, and who is usually fetched into the passage of that bower, when wanted, from some neighbouring home of industry, which has the curious property of imparting an inflammatory appearance to her visage." Of other amusing observations, including the meeting of migratory leeches in Field Court, Gray's Inn, I must refer the reader to the book itself.

The same must be said regarding the strange story of Mr Testator concerning the chambers he occupied in Lyons Inn; although I pause to remind the reader that Lyons Inn has long since disappeared from its site in Newcastle Street, Strand, as has its successor the Globe Theatre, which was wiped out of existence by the Aldwych-Kingsway improvements. Although it belonged to the Inner Temple; although its history dated back before the days of Henry V.; and although the great legist, Sir Edward Coke, was a "reader" to the Inn—a post Selden subsequently refused no fewer than three times—it is because William Weare, who was murdered by Thurtell, lived here, that the place seems now chiefly remembered.

Many other chambers are mentioned in this paper—one of Dickens's best: on the terrace of the Adelphi, where Garrick lived and the Savage Club dwells in a sort of perpetual fear of removal, but gay and mirth-provoking, notwithstanding (there are no dreary chambers in *that* house, I'll be bound); in Bedford Row and James Street, and the rest. "But," to make a last extract, "the only popular legend known in relation to any one of the dull family of Inns,



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is a dark Old Bailey whisper concerning Clement's, and importing how the black creature who holds the sun-dial there, was a negro who slew his master and built the dismal pile out of the contents of his strong box—for which architectural offence alone he ought to have been condemned to live in it." I may add that the more prosaic and generally accepted story is that this figure of the crouching negro was brought from Italy by one of the Earls of Clare, who presented it to the Inn. This is probable, as the Clare family were the ground landlords of the place. When the Benchers disestablished themselves and sold the Inn (on which new buildings have been erected), they gave the Negro to the Inner Temple in whose gardens it may now be seen.<sup>1</sup>

Our Traveller's second lodging in London was over a hatter's in Bond Street, from which lonely spot (so he terms it) he makes "pilgrimages into the surrounding wilderness, and traverses extensive tracts of the Great Desert." It would be pleasant to identify the actual house (for Dickens generally had some definite grounds for his statements); and as about this time there were two hatters in Bond Street—namely, Thomas Griffiths on the west side, at No. 40; and Thomas Hood, opposite, at No. 2, next to Truefitt's, at the corner of Burlington Gardens, one likes to think it was one of these (preferably the latter, because of the name) that housed the Uncommercial Traveller.

His wanderings here were chiefly local: the Burlington Arcade, and its diminutive shops; the emporiums of Messrs Truefitt and Mr Atkinson, and the wealth displayed at Messrs Hunt and Roskell's; Savile Row—then a great headquarters for doctors (Sir Benjamin Brodie lived, we know, at No. 16); Clifford Street, and other thoroughfares in the immediate neighbourhood which have altered less than those in many parts of London.

<sup>1</sup> There are some interesting references to, and a charming picture of, the figure and the beautiful little garden house once adjoining the buildings of Clement's Inn, in Dr Philip Norman's fascinating book, *London Vanished and Vanishing*.



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Here and there one comes across casual references to localities in the metropolis, which make us realise its immense growth even since the middle of the last century. One such is when the Traveller (in Chapter XVIII.) speaks of coming to the right hand of the Canal Bridge (that over the Regent's Canal, in Regent's Park), "near the cross-path to Chalk Farm." A path in London ! But if we examine a contemporary plan, we shall realise how this was possible ; for north of the Park, then, there was relatively little building development, and one had not to walk far before getting into quite rural surroundings.

In a later paper we get a word-picture of the Docks and the variegated life which surged about them, and Shadwell Church (close to which was the opium den of *Edwin Drood*), which had been erected in 1821, on the site of an earlier structure, an excellent view of which may be seen in Wilkinson's *Londina Illustrata*. All this part was intimately known to Dickens, and references to the Docks and their neighbourhood may be found, as we have seen, in several of his novels—*Dombey and Son*, and *Great Expectations*, for instance.

"The City of the Absent" (Chapter XXI.) forms a pendant to the earlier article on "City Churches," for it is concerned with those graveyards attached to these places of worship. "Such strange churchyards hide in the City of London," Dickens writes ; "churchyards sometimes so entirely detached from churches, always so pressed upon by houses ; so small, so rank, so silent, so forgotten, except by the few people who ever look down into them from their smoky windows." One of these, which he calls "the churchyard of Saint Ghastly Grim, lies at the heart of the City, and the Blackwall Railway shrieks at it daily." This is, of course, St Olave's, Hart Street, close to the Fenchurch Street terminus, with its gateway of skulls and cross-bones and iron spikes (hence the ghastly grim epithet) ; the church so often mentioned by Pepys, and where that delightful creature, and, incidentally, very able man, lies buried. Other churchyards are mentioned, although not by name, and, as

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I have said before, in reference to other London vignettes, it is rather in its atmospheric than topographical effects that this paper is notable.

For the rest, we have an allusion to Titbull's Almshouses, which give their name to Chapter XXVII. I think it probable that the prototype of this building was the Vintner's Almshouses. We know that Titbull's "was in the east end, in a great highway, and in a poor, busy and thronged neighbourhood"; all of which can be said for these almshouses, which are just beyond the Trinity Almshouses, and slightly to the east of the spot where the Whitechapel Road (the great highway referred to) merges into the Mile-End Road, where the old turnpike used to be. As an alternative I would suggest the Skinners' Almshouses, in the Whitechapel Road, just west of the Trinity Almshouses. They were founded in 1688 from money left by a Mr Lewis Newbury; and were destroyed soon after 1892. On the other hand Dickens may have had Meggs's Almshouses, of which I here give a picture, in his mind when he described Titbull's.

To close *The Uncommercial Traveller* on a note of reprobation of London will seem to many people strange, especially as it is Dickens who is here speaking. But as I have said earlier in this volume, Dickens never does seem to me to have been a real London lover: interested in the varied types it presented to his eye; fascinated by a sort of glamour exuding from it; influenced by all sorts of memories connected in his mind with its streets and by-ways—yes; but loving it in its dirt as well as in its splendour; loving it because it is London; because its shortcomings are as potent as its attractions; loving it, as a friend, with all its imperfections on its head, I am inclined to say—no.

I do not mind quoting the following passage, because much that is there reprehended no longer exists; great and splendid buildings, widened thoroughfares, cleanliness and order have taken the place of much that was old, dirty, and of ill-repute:—

"The shabbiness of our English capital," we read, "as

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compared with Paris, Bordeaux, Frankfort, Milan, Geneva—almost any important town on the continent of Europe—I find very striking after an absence of any duration in foreign parts. London is shabby in contrast with Edinburgh, with Aberdeen, with Exeter, with Liverpool, with a bright little town like Bury St Edmunds. London is shabby in contrast with New York, with Boston, with Philadelphia. In detail, one would say it can rarely fail to be a disappointing piece of shabbiness to a stranger from any of those places. There is nothing shabbier than Drury Lane, in Rome itself. The meanness of Regent Street, set against the great line of Boulevards in Paris, is as striking as the abortive ugliness of Trafalgar Square, set against the gallant beauty of the Place de la Concorde. London is shabby by daylight, and shabbier by gas-light.”

I contend that, true as so much of this is, no real London lover would have penned it. He might have thought it; he might have said it in familiar converse, as one may lightly touch on the failings of a friend with no abatement of regard; but he would never have allowed it to be printed under the sign-manual of his name.





INTERIOR OF FURNIVAL'S INN  
FROM A PRINT BY DALE





## XVII

### MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

#### (1) SUNDAY UNDER THREE HEADS (1836)

THIS scarce little tract in three parts, for it is really that, was one of Dickens's earliest productions. It is characteristic of much of his later work in that it sets out to right abuses which existed in his time, and which his growing powers and influence did so much to ameliorate if not entirely to remove. The little book is thus essentially of its period ; and would hardly take its place in this volume were it not that there are one or two references to London in it ; although, to tell the truth, those references are of the meagrest and most general character. Indeed there is little that can be termed specifically topographical. It is, however, interesting to observe that, in the course of these pages, Dickens takes occasion to show what a wise policy (a policy happily in force to-day) it would be to throw open such places as the British Museum and the National Gallery to the people on Sundays, instead of driving them, through the absence of such facilities for wholesome recreation and improvement, into the gin-reeking taverns that then disgraced the streets.

Reading in this little book you will gain a vivid idea of what a London Sunday in the year of grace, 1836, was like ; you will learn what the Sabbath Bills would make it ; you will realise what, in the opinion of one curiously capable of judging such matters, it might be made. From Holborn and Tottenham Court Road to the repulsive slums that then existed in St Giles's and Drury Lane (now improved out of existence, one of the few cases in which the destruction of old buildings in London has been really justified), you may survey the wretched, listless attitude of those who might reasonably have regarded Sunday as a day of rest, but who

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found it but a day of boredom, from which the one escape was the tavern and the gin shop.

There are three woodcuts illustrating the story. The first shows us the Seven Dials crowded with wretchedness and vice, with the peelers or bobbies (the nucleus of our great police force) arresting miserable vagabonds, or being abused by raging viragoes. The second indicates an eating-house at the corner of Bread Street, and kept by M'Dough (!). There is a church tower in the background, which may be intended to represent St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, although the tower can hardly be said to be a speaking likeness. These illustrations, by Hablot K. Browne ("Phiz"), who was destined to be so closely identified with Dickens's later books, help to give that "atmosphere" which is so largely present in the letterpress.

The volume is a very scarce one ; but two reprints were made of it ; not, however, by the author, who never republished it among his collected works.

### (2) THE MUDFOG PAPERS (1837)

"The Mudfog Papers" are not among Dickens's well-known productions, having been interred in *Bentley's Miscellany* (in which they appeared during 1837-1839), until they were reprinted in book form, in 1880. Nor can they truthfully be said to be outstanding productions, being of the character of those lesser works by which their author, as it were, helped to unload his wealth of minor ideas, while their chief current was being directed through the medium of *Pickwick*. Mudfog might be anywhere—the whole series of papers may, indeed, be a sort of skit on the larger life of London ; and when we are told that the place is "extremely picturesque," and that "Limehouse and Ratcliffe Highway are both something like it," we get, I believe, a hint of caricature on a small scale ; and under the guise of a country town Dickens may, in a satirical way, be adumbrating the larger life of "our village," as Mr Wenham calls the metropolis. There

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is, however, very little having any direct reference to London in "The Mudfog Papers"; and had there not been one or two references, in certain other articles, which also appeared in *Bentley's Magazine*, and which were reprinted with the Mudfog series, one would have passed this lesser work of Dickens over as being outside our present purview.

In "The Pantomime of Life" (March 1837) we find such a reference to the Stock Exchange; which gives me the opportunity of pointing out that this institution was not then in its present *habitat*, which was erected in 1854, with additions thirty years later, but in the earlier building dating from 1801, and actually first used in the following year. Then there is the *Café de l'Europe*, in the Haymarket, out of which an old gentleman is represented as just emerging. This "Tavern and Hotel," as it is described at this period, was situated at No. 9 Haymarket, two doors to the north of the Haymarket Theatre, occupying premises between Messrs Cawthorns's, Wine Merchants (No. 10), and White's, the then well-known chemist (No. 8).

The theatres referred to by the dirty-faced man as "the Garden" and "the 'Delphi" hardly require further explanation, and the dancers and clowns—Brown, King and Gibson—who performed at the latter, and went afterwards to the Surrey Theatre, and C. J. Smith, who acted Guy Fawkes at the former, and, later, was to be seen at Sadler's Wells, enter into theatrical rather than topographical annals.

In "Some Particulars concerning a Lion" (May 1837) we learn indirectly that at that remote period the Zoological Gardens possessed but one specimen of the lion tribe, and, according to Dickens, "a sleepy, dreamy, sluggish quadruped" at that. In the absence of further pertinent facts, let me remind the reader that these gardens were then in their youth, having been opened only nine years before the date of Dickens's article; the principal founders being the famous Sir Humphry Davy and Sir Stamford Raffles. The last piece reprinted with "The Mudfog Papers" concerns



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Mr Robert Bolton, a "gentleman connected with the Press." Mr Bolton was one of a certain type then not uncommon, but he only interests here in that he is first met in the parlour of the Green Dragon, a public-house in the immediate neighbourhood of Westminster Bridge. When Taylor ("Water Poet") wrote his *Travels through London*, there were no fewer than seven Green Dragons in the city, one of which survived till recent times, notably the famous coaching inn, with that sign, at 85 and 86 Bishopsgate Street, which is supposed to have been the original of the Blue Boar, whence Sam Weller dispatched his valentine to Mary the housemaid. I have not, however, been able to identify the Green Dragon at Westminster, and it is more than probable that it is a fictitious name given to one of the numerous hotels or coffee-houses which, in 1838, existed in this neighbourhood.

### (3) CHRISTMAS BOOKS (1843-1846)

The five Christmas Books, comprising *A Christmas Carol*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Chimes*, *The Haunted Man*, and *The Battle of Life*, possess so few allusions to London that they might have been regarded as not coming within the scope of this volume at all, had there not been some references which, for the sake of completeness, should not be entirely neglected. *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1846) and *The Battle of Life* (1846) can be dismissed, as they contain nothing to the purpose. Indeed in them there is little, if anything, to indicate that London is represented in their scenarios at all. In *The Chimes* (1845) we know that Sir Joseph Bowley lived "in the great district of the town. The greatest district of the town—commonly called the world"; which may indicate any locality in Mayfair or Belgravia, probably the latter, whose large stuccoed houses seem appropriately to form a background to the worthy baronet's appearance and importance, presenting, as they do, to the world of London something analogous to those characteristics. But the most interesting association with the city, in the little book, is

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that which connects Trotty Veck, and the Chimes themselves, with the Church of St Dunstan's, Fleet Street, whose Bell Tower is specifically mentioned. When Dickens wrote the tale, this church was really of recent erection, for in 1829 the ancient building, which had existed here from very early times, and had been repaired after its damage by the Great Fire, was taken down and the present structure built on its site. The Bell Tower, so intimately connected in one's mind with Trotty and the Chimes that weave themselves into the fabric of the story, was adapted from that of St Helen's, at York.<sup>1</sup>

The little alley, close by, up which Trotty takes Will Fern, is, no doubt, Clifford's Inn Passage, leading from Fleet Street to the sadly mutilated old Inn which the Law Students rented, in 1345, from the De Cliffords, to whom the site had been given by Edward II. The Hall, past which Trotty must have gone, is where the Commissioners for the assessing of the damage caused by the Great Fire sat and deliberated.

In *The Haunted Man* (1848), although we find here and there descriptive passages giving a general idea of the London streets at Christmas time, and, so to speak, exuding the atmospheric charm of such things which Dickens knew so well how to convey, there is nothing actually tangible, relative to the city; and a chance reference to Peckham Fair and Battersea, made by William Swidger in describing Mrs Swidger's constitution, is the nearest approach we have to a topographical allusion.

There remains *A Christmas Carol* (1843), that little masterpiece—perhaps, considering it in all its aspects, Dickens's greatest literary achievement. But even here it is not, I think, so much the actual references to metropolitan places, such as St Paul's and the Mansion House; Cornhill, with the slide down which Bob Cratchit went “at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being

<sup>1</sup> The statue of Queen Elizabeth was once on Ludgate, and was brought here in 1766. It dates from just one hundred and eighty years earlier.

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Christmas"; or Camden Town, where he lived, or "the fashionable Parks," where Peter Cratchit yearned to exhibit his monstrous shirt collar; as the description of Scrooge's chambers which is of interest here. We do not know, however, exactly where they were situated: that "gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again"; that gloomy house with its great balustraded staircase; and the fireplace in Scrooge's bedroom, "built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures."

The particularity of this description makes it almost certain that some actual chambers were in Dickens's mind when he wrote it, and it thus possesses importance apart from that which it has, as a part of Scrooge's daily environment. I imagine the rooms to have been in one of the old Inns of Court—Clifford's Inn or Serjeants' Inn, or which you like; anywhere "up a yard," and that yard may have been Clifford's Inn Passage.

Of the position of his office, we hardly know more. True, we get something of a hint when we are told that the "gruff old bell of an ancient tower of a church was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall," and this should limit our area. For instance St Dunstan's in the East has a Gothic tower, and so has St Mary Aldermary. The former is between Tower Street and Upper Thames Street; the latter between Bow Lane and what is now Queen Victoria Street. If the former edifice is indicated, Scrooge's office may well have been in Cross Lane, leading out of St Dunstan's Hill, on the east side, or Idol Lane, on the other side of the church, communicating with Tower Street. If, however, the latter church is the Gothic place of worship Dickens had in his mind, there were then several little courts and alleys immediately surrounding the structure



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which might well have served for the site of Scrooge's office. It is mere guesswork ; but that is half the fun in these attempts to localise the illusive, and these efforts to fit into their proper place the innumerable pieces of our author's jig-saw puzzle.

A more general view of London is presented in Stave 3, when Scrooge is led by the Ghost of Christmas Present about the city, and is finally introduced to Bob Cratchit's homely interior. "They stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses.

"The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground. . . . There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town ; and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain. . . . The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory . . . and the grocers' ! oh, the grocers' ! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one ; but through those gaps such glimpses ! "

Here we have that intimate note, that result of untiring and acute observation which Dickens brought to bear on such things, giving us as a result something so vivid as to convey an actual picture to the mind, without revealing the locality of that picture. Here we have not one particular London thoroughfare, but a microcosm of what any London street may have presented to the eye in those early Victorian days, when the spirit of the Christmas season made glad the not very well-endowed home of Bob Cratchit, added to the essential jollity of Scrooge's nephew, and even softened the hardening, but not entirely hardened, heart of Scrooge himself.



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### (4) HUNTED DOWN (1859)

“Hunted Down” is, as most people know, a story based on the career of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the poisoner, who dabbled in literature, wrote articles for *The London Magazine*, under the *nom de guerre* of Janus Weathercock, and was a one-time friend and associate of such men as Talfourd (to whom *Pickwick* was dedicated), Charles Lamb, and others of their circle. In an Introduction to Dickens’s story (which, by the way, was written for *The New York Ledger*)—that is to say, to the story as it afterwards appeared in John Camden Hotten’s reprint—an account is given of the career of the monster who figures in the little book as Julius Slinkton. There is, therefore, no need to recapitulate its gruesome and repulsive details. It is sufficient to say that Wainewright’s methods were, roughly, the insuring of the lives of various relatives, and the subsequent taking of those lives by poison, in order that he might become possessed of the insurance money. One of his victims was a half-sister of his wife, the Margaret Niner of the tale. On the title page and paper cover of the reprint is shown a sketch of No. 12 Conduit Street, called there “The Fatal House,” because it was one of Wainewright’s abodes (he had lived earlier at Linden House, Turnham Green), and here Madelaine Abercrombie, another half-sister, was done to death by poison.

This house, which was over the shop of Nicoll’s, the tailor, does not, however, enter into the story whose London topography may be said to be confined to the Middle Temple (where Dickens, by the way, once entered his name as a student—although he was never called to the Bar). There is no indication as to what part of the Middle Temple the chambers, opposite each other, of Slinkton and his intended victim, Alfred Beckwith, otherwise Meltham, occupied; and so it is little to our purpose that we gain from the pages of “Hunted Down.”

I may note, however, that the insurance offices in which

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Slinkton was successful in effecting policies on various lives (although in the sequel he benefited not at all from the proceeding) were the Palladium, the Hope, the Pelican, the Imperial, and the Provident; and that those which were not so easily hoodwinked were the Globe, the Alliance, and the Eagle.

The Palladium, the Hope, the Pelican, the Imperial, and the Globe no longer exist, so far as I know—at least not under these names. The Provident, the Alliance, and the Eagle do; the last-named occupying that historic site in Pall Mall where Nell Gwynn once had her house—the only freehold in that thoroughfare.<sup>1</sup>

### (5) TO BE READ AT DUSK (1852)

In 1898, a number of articles by Dickens, hitherto scattered about in various periodicals, were collected and published by the late Mr Kitton, who wrote an Introduction to the whole. The place of honour was given to a short story entitled “To be Read at Dusk,” which was originally contributed to *The Keepsake*, for 1852, at the request of its then editress, Miss Power. In this collection of various stories and articles we shall find certain allusions to London of more or less interest and importance.

In the opening story, however, there is little to our purpose; and when we have noted that the courier who tells it mentions Long’s Hotel, in Bond Street, to a gentleman staying at which, he took his credentials; and that a certain Mr James, one of the protagonists of the tale, lived in Poland Street, we have exhausted its Londoniana. I may, however,

<sup>1</sup> It may interest some readers to have this additional information about these insurance offices. The Globe (one of the only three incorporated by charter at about this time—the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century) had offices in Cornhill and Pall Mall; the Imperial, established in 1803, also in Cornhill; the Eagle, established in 1807, in the same thoroughfare; the Hope, founded in 1767, and with offices in Bridge Street and Oxford Street; and the Alliance, established in 1824, in St Swithin’s Lane.

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note that Long's Hotel was, and is, at 16 New Bond Street, and that here Sir Walter Scott stayed in 1815. Since those days the place has been rebuilt (in 1888), and much altered, but in Tallis's Views its elevation is shown, and the name of Markwell given as that of the proprietor.

Poland Street, hardly now to be regarded as residential, was at one time quite a fashionable thoroughfare, and even so late as 1811, Shelley, on his expulsion from University College, Oxford, took lodgings at No. 15; while Blake had resided at No. 28, some twenty-four years previously.

Goodman's Fields, where Mr James and his brother John are recorded as having their business premises, is that district lying between the Minories and Whitechapel, which, even so early as 1760, had lost all traces of rurality except what resided in its appellation; although the open space from which it took its name is shown in Horwood's plan of 1799 as being surrounded by houses whose frontages gave on to the four thoroughfares that enclosed it—namely, Leman Street, Ayliffe Street, Great Mansell Street, and Prescott Street. Marks Street now runs through it from north to south.

The *Extraordinary Gazette*, incorporating the speech of the editor on opening the second number of *Bentley's Miscellany*, an amusing parody on an official announcement, describes the progress of his Mightiness the Editor to New Burlington Street; and reminds us that the offices of the well-known publishers were for long at No. 8, in that thoroughfare; while an "address on the completion of the first volume of the *Miscellany*," records the superintendence of it by Mr Samuel Bentley, of Dorset Street, Fleet Street, who carried on the printing business there, as he did in Shoe Lane.

An article on the "Chinese Junk," then (1848) an object of interest lying in the Thames, tells us of this weird marine monster as being "shut up in a corner of a dock near the Whitebait House at Blackwall, for the edification of men." The Whitebait House alluded to was Lovegrove's Tavern, known also as the Brunswick, famous for its fish dinners.



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It was closed some thirty-odd years ago, and the building transformed into an Emigrant Dépôt. The Artichoke Tavern was another noted house, preserving the tradition that whitebait was here first eaten. It was flourishing in 1891, and may be still—one hopes it is.

We fly on Ariel's wings, in these papers, from the east to the west with bewildering alternation, and in a paper on the "American Panorama" (1848) are introduced to what was then a novelty, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. You might search long enough now for this once, and really so recent, well-known landmark, which stood guarded by its sphinxes, opposite Burlington House, at what was then Nos. 170-172 in the thoroughfare. Its frontage looked like the entrance to an Egyptian tomb. It was erected in 1812, and was the home of Bullock's Museum. The contents being sold seven years later, the building was used for miscellaneous exhibitions, and, in 1848, Banvard's Moving Panorama, of the Mississippi (concerning which Dickens is here writing) was exhibited. Until its demolition Messrs Maskelyne & Cook occupied the place, and made its interior a fitting mysterious counterpart to its external decoration—on which hieroglyphics contended with the affecting influence of London's proverbial atmosphere.

In a paper entitled "Crime and Education"<sup>1</sup> Dickens records his impressions of the Ragged School, in West Street, Saffron Hill, a locality between Holborn and Clerkenwell, of which he indicates his peculiar and extensive knowledge in *Oliver Twist*, and which was one of the worst in London at that period; while in *An American in Europe* (1849), being a criticism on a certain Mr Colman's exceedingly naïve conception of our manners and customs, he takes occasion to allude to the rival claims of Messrs Warren's blacking, at 30 Strand, and that of Day & Martin, at 97 High Holborn;

<sup>1</sup> This was a letter to the *Daily News* (for 4th February 1846), of which he was the founder and first editor. He had had conversations with the Baroness Burdett-Coutts (an old friend), three years earlier, on this subject.



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a subject, considering his youthful experiences, about which he may be credited with knowing more than a little. The full title of the former firm was originally Warren, Russell & Wright, and they called their production, The Premier Blacking.

The references to various types of small theatres and other places of popular amusement, in the article on "The Amusements of the People" (1850), are too general in character to afford any opportunities for annotation; nor do the other papers prove more remunerative, from our present point of view, although here and there the names of London places crop up. There is, however, one entitled "Lively Turtle" (1850), to which I make special reference, because Dickens says that when he goes to London he goes "to Mrs Skim's Private Hotel and Commercial Lodging House, near Aldersgate Street, City," and adds that it is advertised in Bradshaw's Railway Guide, where he first found it. Now I always take this to be that "hybrid hotel (the Falcon), in a little square behind Aldersgate Street," at which Jasper of *Edwin Drood* stayed. I do not suppose for a moment that Miss Skim was the proprietress, or that if (as I suppose I ought to do) I went to the British Museum and consulted a Bradshaw for the year 1850, I should find its advertisement; but that it had an actual counterpart no one familiar with Dickens's methods could for a moment doubt.

But this article has another interesting reference to a place of whose identity no one can be in the dark, I mean the famous Birch's, in Cornhill. Dickens, asking a member of the Common Council (whom he facetiously terms Mr Goggles) where the best turtle soup can be obtained, is informed that he can't do better than Birch's for a basin, but as he requires a tureen, he should go "right opposite the India House, Leadenhall Street."

Now this was the Ship and Turtle Tavern, kept by Painter, at Nos. 129 and 130 Leadenhall Street, shown, by Tallis, to be then (1838) a quaint little structure, with a façade lower than those of the adjacent buildings, and

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apparently provided with two entrances—one, no doubt, communicating with a yard.

For another reason this paper, the last in this collection affording any material for London references, should appeal to lovers of the metropolis. I have said elsewhere that Dickens never seems to me to be one of that band, in the true sense of the word ; but, for all that, we here find the following words concerning our city with which one likes better to associate the great author than with those strictures on the dirt and *désagréments* of the metropolis of which we find him, in other connections, not too sparing. Here is the passage :

“I like London. The way I look at it, is this. London is not a cheap place, but, on the whole, you can get more of the real thing for your money there—I mean the best thing, whatever it is—than you can get in most places.”

### (6) CHRISTMAS STORIES CONTRIBUTED TO *HOUSEHOLD WORDS* AND *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* (1850-1867)

Among Dickens's miscellaneous works are included the stories he wrote for *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. Most of these were produced in collaboration with that little band of writers which he gathered round him for the conduct of these ventures, and which included such well-known names as those of Wilkie Collins, G. A. Sala, Mrs Gaskell, Miss Hesba Stretton, Miss Amelia B. Edwards, and Miss Adelaide Anne Procter. It was Dickens's custom to issue a yearly Christmas number of each periodical, and these were reprinted and sold separately—being known as *Christmas Stories*, and of course to be differentiated from the more famous *Christmas Books*—*A Christmas Carol* and *The Battle of Life*, which were entirely written by the master.

The Londoniana of the Christmas stories does not amount to much. Most of the tales are concerned with aspects of life far removed from the metropolis ; many of their chapters are not Dickens's work at all ; and although here and there

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his hand is visible, it is chiefly the hand that edits or links up the work of others. As, however, the head cook in a kitchen may be responsible for some subtle seasoning, a pinch of salt, say, in the dishes prepared by lesser culinary artists, thus giving them their special flavour, so it is quite possible that Dickens may have added a topographical touch here and there—especially a London topographical touch. But it will be better to restrict ourselves to a consideration of such of the Christmas stories as are known to have emanated directly from him, and to note any London allusions they may contain.

Although not quite germane to the purpose of this book, I give here a list of the latter :

### *Household Words :*

- 1850. A Christmas Tree.
- 1851. What Christmas is as We Grow Older.
- 1852. The Poor Relation's Story.  
The Child's Story.
- 1853. The Schoolboy's Story.  
Nobody's Story.
- 1854. The First Story.  
The Road.
- 1855. The Boots.  
The Guest.  
The Bill.
- 1856. The Wreck.
- 1857. Island of Silver Store.  
Rafts on the River.
- 1858. Going into Society.
- 1859. The Mortals in the House.  
The Ghost in Master B.'s Room.  
The Ghost in the Corner Room.
- 1860. The Village.  
The Money.  
The Restitution.

### *All the Year Round :*

- 1861. Picking up Soot and Cinders.  
Picking up Miss Kimmeens.  
Picking up the Tinker.

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1862. His Leaving It Till Called For.  
His Boots.  
His Brown-Paper Parcel.  
His Wonderful End.
1863. How Mrs Lirriper carried on the Business.  
How the Parlours added a Few Words.
1864. Mrs Lirriper—how She Went On, and Went Over.  
Mrs Lirriper—how Jemmy Topped Up.
1865. To be Taken Immediately.  
To be Taken with a Grain of Salt.  
To be Taken for Life.
1866. Barbox Brothers.  
Barbox Brothers & Co.  
Main Line: The Boy at Mugby.  
Branch Line: The Signalman.
1867. No Thoroughfare (*with* WILKIE COLLINS).

The references to London to be found among these stories, by Dickens himself, are confined to nine of them—viz. “A Round of Stories” (1852); “The Haunted House” (1859); “A Message from the Sea” (1860); “Somebody’s Luggage” (1862); “Mrs Lirriper’s Lodgings” (1863); “Dr Marigold’s Prescriptions” (1865); “Mugby Junction” (1866); and “No Thoroughfare” (1867).<sup>1</sup>

In the first the Poor Relation tells how he lives in lodgings in the Clapham Road; takes his breakfast at the old-established coffee-house near Westminster Bridge; and then goes and sits (he doesn’t exactly know why) at Garraway’s Coffee House, or walks on ’Change. Sometimes he takes the child of his cousin to look at the Monument, and at the Bridges, and, indeed, at all the sights that are free. There is nothing here which we have not met with before; nor is annotation, therefore, necessary; except that I think the coffee-house near Westminster Bridge was probably Fendall’s, at No. 14 Bridge Street, whose proprietor also kept the hotel at the south-east corner of Parliament Street, facing towards Great George Street.

I may note that in the chapter entitled “The Ghost in the

<sup>1</sup> These are the general headings of the stories.



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Double Room," of "The Haunted House," although it is not wholly by Dickens, that Alfred Starling describes how he, when young, was apprenticed to Messrs Baum, Brömm & Boompjees, of Finsbury Circus; and how when his articles expired he gave a feast to the clerks at a hostelry in Newgate Street, which I take to have been the Salutation Tavern, at No. 17, on the south side of the thoroughfare. It was entered by an archway, and an advertisement of it informs us that an "ordinary" was held there daily at two o'clock, and that board and lodging were to be had "by agreement." It was kept, at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, by one Thomas White. In earlier days it had been known as the Salutation and Cat, with a tradition that Wren was accustomed to resort hither while St Paul's was a-building; and the well-founded fact that here Lamb and Coleridge were wont to forgather to discuss literature and philosophy over welsh-rabbits and egg-flip. Later on, Starling finds himself, having been rejected by his "adored Matilda," wandering about Soho, with the result that, meeting a recruiting sergeant at the corner of Bateman's Buildings, he promptly enlists. Bateman's Buildings possess an historic interest in that they occupy the site of the Duke of Monmouth's mansion, after whose execution it passed to Lord Bateman, and was demolished in 1773. J. T. Smith has left an interesting account, as well as a drawing, of the fine old mansion.

The only reference to a London locality in "A Message from the Sea," is that to America Square, in which the miserable creature, Lawrence Clissold, becomes a clerk at the office of the Dringworths, in that spot which has no history or traditions.

In "Somebody's Luggage" there are also but few allusions to London, in Dickens's own contributions. The waiter who opens the first story, however, refers to Freemasons' Tavern, the London Tavern, and the Albion; and I may remind the reader that the first of these well-known hostelries is situated in Great Queen Street, where it has

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been since it was built in 1786 ; although the remodelling of it in 1868 essentially changed its original appearance. The London Tavern, at 123 (formerly No. 7) Bishopsgate Street Within, dates from 1765 ; while the Albion, 153 Aldersgate Street, has also long been gastronomically famous.

This occurs in the first story, entitled " His Leaving It Till Called For " ; in the seventh, " His Brown-Paper Parcel," the narrator tells how he becomes enamoured of a certain Henrietta (surname not given), and how, when walking with her and " enjoying the cool breezes wafted over Vauxhall Bridge," the lady exclaims : " Let's go home by Grosvenor Place, Piccadilly, and Waterloo "—localities, I may state for the information of the stranger and the foreigner, well known in London, and the last a Bridge. Those who may be wandering in Piccadilly may like to know that the pair kept to the right of that thoroughfare, where there is " a row of trees, the railing of the Green Park, and a fine broad eligible piece of pavement."

One of the most outstanding of these Christmas numbers was that containing " Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings," which was, indeed, so successful that Dickens followed it up with " Mrs Lirriper's Legacy." Mrs Lirriper lived at No. 81 Norfolk Street, Strand, and although I need hardly say there is no such number, the street is one which is known to most people. When we are introduced to Mrs Lirriper she had already rented the house for many years, although she was above advertising it, as her rival, Miss Wozenham, lower down on the other side of the street, did *her* apartments. Mr Lirriper was dead. He had married Mrs Lirriper at St Clements Dane's forty years before the date of the story. Dickens, once discussing the Norfolk Street abode, said : " Of course Mrs Lirriper lived on the east side of the street ; on the northern side of Howard Street." Other notable people have resided there—Peter the Great, and Mountfort the actor of Charles II.'s day, who was murdered by Lord Mohun close by, and Ireland, the Shakespeare forger, and Coleridge ;

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but it is really Mrs Lirriper's street, and as one goes through it, even its rebuilt houses cannot efface her abiding memory. To her lodgings here came Major Jackman, who called Miss Wozenham's lodgings "a vast coal-sack," and the Edsons, who had been staying at the Adelphi Hotel (Mr Wardle's *pied-à-terre*). Mrs Lirriper's description of how she follows the unhappy discarded Mrs Edson on to the Adelphi, and, with the aid of the Major, helps to save her from suicide, is a remarkable piece of narrative ; and the subsequent account of the lady's death is pure pathos.

In "Dr Marigold's Prescriptions," the chapter entitled "To be Taken with a Grain of Salt" contains an extraordinarily thrilling ghost story, told in Dickens's incomparable manner when handling such themes. It here, of course, only interests us so far as it relates to London features. The chief of these is the block of chambers "in Piccadilly, very near to the corner of St James's Street," where the narrator had rooms, and where he first experienced those curious phenomena which were to have a sequel in the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey. These chambers were, no doubt, the York Chambers, which actually, until recently, when the whole north-east corner of St James's Street was rebuilt, had their entrance in St James's Street itself, although many of the rooms overlooked Piccadilly.

Little as "Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions" have afforded us in the direction of Londoniana, "Mugby Junction" is hardly more productive ; indeed after we have learnt that Messrs Barbox Brothers had offices in "the corner of a court off Lombard Street . . . the prevailing colours of which had been few and sombre," we exhaust the subject ; only being left in doubt as to which of the various by-ways from Banker's Street—there are so many to choose from—it could have been.

The last of the Christmas numbers is "No Thoroughfare," one of the three ("The Perils of Certain English Prisoners," and "A Message from the Sea" were the others) which forms a complete story in itself. I need not recapitulate its details ;



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but would remind the reader that it opens at the Foundling Hospital, where the foundlings, in earlier days, were received without question in a cradle at the gate, but where, in Dickens's time, "enquiries are made respecting them, and they are taken as by favour from the mothers, who relinquish all natural knowledge of them and claim to them for evermore." Whether the fact that the Foundling Clock was proverbially behind those of St Paul's and other public buildings, as emphatically stated by Dickens, was a regular occurrence, it is not possible to say.

There is a good description of a dinner at this institution : "The girls' refectory (including that of the younger children) is the principal attraction," we are told, for visitors. "Neat attendants silently glide about the orderly and silent tables ; the lookers-on move or stop as the fancy takes them ; comments in whispers on face such a number from such a window are not unfrequent ; many of the faces are of a character to fix attention. Some of the visitors from the outside public are accustomed visitors. They have established a speaking acquaintance with the occupants of particular seats at the tables, and halt at those points to bend down and say a word or two. It is no disparagement to say that those points are generally points where personal attractions are. The monotony of the long spacious rooms and the double lines of faces is agreeably relieved by these incidents, although so slight." This is the place which the benefaction of Captain Coram founded in 1739 ; to which Handel bequeathed the score of *The Messiah*, and whose walls gleam with the works of many of our most illustrious painters—the portrait of the founder by Hogarth, as well as *The March from Finchley*, and other of his works, being conspicuous.

Later on we are introduced to the premises of Wilding & Co., Wine Merchants, in "a court-yard diverging from a steep, a slippery, and a winding street connecting Tower Street with the Middlesex shore of the Thames"—known as Cripple Corner ; in close proximity to certain steps leading down to the river itself, facetiously christened Break Neck



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Stairs. No actual spot can be identified as the original of this court or these stairs, especially now when so many of these old sites have been obliterated by new and large buildings. But St Dunstan's Hill is winding enough to fulfil one of the necessary points for identification. The M. Jules Obenreizer of the story lives, one remembers, on the north side of Soho Square, with Miss Marguerite and the mysterious Madame Dor; but beyond this fact there is nothing pertinent to our inquiries to be found further in the pages of "No Thoroughfare."

### (7) GONE ASTRAY (1853)

In the 13th of August 1853 number of *Household Words* there appeared a little story with the above title. Although it may have been recognised as a work of Dickens, no one seems to have thought of disinterring it from the decent obscurity of the old files of a more or less forgotten journal until that ardent Dickensian, Mr B. W. Matz, reprinted and published it in 1911. This republication is made additionally interesting by the inclusion of a number of prints of old London illustrating the text, which is, in fact, nothing less than an autobiographical account of a young boy's wanderings about the mazes of the great city. So one may imagine the youthful Dickens, fresh to such experiences, and while yet hardly inured to the drudgery of the Blacking Warehouse, to have been lost; and a chapter might have been added, on the same theme, to the record of the lonely, miserable, early experiences of David Copperfield. In the present instance, however, the boy does not get lost by wandering about alone; but Somebody having volunteered to show him the outside of St Giles's Church, "which was considered likely (I suppose) to quench my romantic fire (concerning St Giles and his ability to cure cripples at the church in question), and to bring me to a practical state," and having done this, and, further, having in addition conducted the boy to Northumberland House, then at Charing Cross,

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where Northumberland Avenue now runs, seems to have disappeared while the youngster was gazing up at the famous lion to see, I suppose, if he were really wagging his tail. I remember well, in my own extreme youth, pondering over the same phenomenon, which, I was told, actually happened—if you looked long enough. Those who would experiment in the matter will now have to go to Syon House, Isleworth, where the identical lion still proudly stands with outstretched, if not with moving, tail.

I will not spoil the pleasure of those who do not know this little story by anticipating their perusal of it with a detailed account of the little boy's wanderings, but will merely note what he saw in a quite general way. First, then, he determined to make his way to the city, to gaze at the Giants at the Guildhall (which he thought meant Gold or Golden Hall). On his way he had a good look at Temple Bar (removed in 1878-1879), as well as at the figures at St Dunstan's Church. It must be remembered that the occurrences here narrated in 1853 must really have taken place about the year 1820-1821,<sup>1</sup> and those giants (so attractive to sightseers) were not carried off by Lord Hertford to St Dunstan's Lodge, Regent's Park, till 1830, when the old church was pulled down. The toy-shop, which proved almost as great an attraction as the figures, and which was still standing in a new form in 1853, was Harrison's, at No. 31 Fleet Street, just opposite the church.

At last the boy gets into the heart of the City, wandering "up courts and down courts—in and out of yards and little squares—peeping into counting-house passages and running away—poorly feeding the echoes in the court of the South-Sea House with my timid steps—roaming down into Austin Friars, and wondering how the Friars used to like it." The South-Sea House was at the north-east end of Threadneedle Street, and here, as everyone knows, both John and Charles Lamb were employed. The place was remodelled in 1855-1856,

<sup>1</sup> Taking it as autobiographical; Dickens was born in 1812, and speaks of the boy in the story being about eight or nine years of age.

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but was subsequently sold and converted into sets of offices. The nave of the old church of Austin Friars' remains, a relic, amidst so much alteration, of the days when the house of the Augustinian Friars was established here by Humphrey Bohun, Earl of Hereford, in 1253.

The Royal Exchange mentioned was not the present one, which only came into existence after the earlier (the second) one, which the boy saw, had been burnt down in 1838. Nor does the Mansion House look as it did to his wondering eyes, for that unsightly excrescence which once crowned it, and was called the Mare's Nest, was then *in situ*, not having been removed till 1842. Had he realised it, the India House which he saw might have reminded him again of Charles Lamb ; but he didn't even know what it was, and on asking a street urchin, had faces made at him and got his hair pulled. Elia's gentle influence evidently did not extend beyond the walls of the building which was doomed to be destroyed in 1861. By the way, Lamb must have been inside the India House while Dickens (for it must have been he) was gazing at its exterior and having his hair pulled, for Elia did not retire till 1825 ; and James Mill, the father of John Stuart, must also have been there, as he first became a clerk to the company in 1819. But perhaps Lamb had already left for the day : one remembers he had that habit, and when called over the coals for it, excused himself by stammering that he always came late ! Our young hero afterwards wandered into Goodman's Fields, and even penetrated into the Royalty, or East London Theatre, in Well Street, close by, near Welleclose Square, which was destined to be burnt down (the fate of all the old theatres, it would seem) six years later.

When he emerged from the play it was dark, and his fears came crowding on him, fears which excitement and interest had for a time banished. He was taken to the old watch-house, in Welleclose Square, the square wherein the author of *Sandford and Merton* had once dwelt. How Mr Thomas Day would have reprehended such a vagabond spirit as that



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which led the boy into his first adventure, even if he looked tolerantly on the great man's subsequent account of it !

### (8) REPRINTED PIECES (1850-1853)

Besides the contributions to the Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, Dickens wrote a variety of tales, sketches and miscellaneous articles, which appeared in the pages of those periodicals as well as in other serials. Among these I need only specify those which contain London allusions of any special interest ; they are all in *Household Words*, and are as follows :—"Lying Awake" (1852) ; "The Detective Police" (1850) ; and "Down with the Tide" (1853). Diligent searchers will find references to London in many other occasional papers by Dickens, but these are either of too slight or allusive a character to require recapitulation here, or they concern such places as we have already met with in the novels, and, therefore, will not bear repetition. In "Lying Awake" we have a reference, in the first paragraph, to a long-since vanished London landmark : Dolly's Chop-House. It stood in Queen's Head Passage, connecting Paternoster Row with Newgate Street, and was established in the reign of Queen Anne on the identical site where an ordinary had been kept by Richard Tarlton, the clown of Elizabethan days. It was noted for its beefsteaks "hot and hot," to which allusion is made in *Humphry Clinker* ; and Macaulay, in some of his lighter verses, refers to the place. It was pulled down just forty years ago. In the Chop-House was a window on which was painted the head of Queen Anne, which some authorities have thought may have given the name to the court in which the tavern stood.

An allusion to Clare Market, a little farther on, reminds us of a spot which has long ceased to exist. It was situated between Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Strand, at the point, north of Vere Street, where Portugal Street and Twining Street intersect. It was a collocation of small and dirty



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streets and courts given over to butchers' and greengrocers' shops, and on Saturday nights was a noisy, crowded centre dominated by gas flares and malodorous exusions. But its antiquity and historical genesis (it took its name from John Holles, Earl of Clare, and was originally known as the New Market) gave it an interest for the antiquary and, to some extent, for the lover of the picturesque, and as such Dickens no doubt thought of it when "lying awake."

Another sleepless vision was that of Horsemonger Gaol, where he imagined again seeing the Mannings' bodies hanging, as he had actually seen them, as he has elsewhere recorded, on the morning of 13th November 1849. The gaol stood on the east of Newington Causeway, midway between Union Road and New Kent Road, but was demolished in 1879, just sixty-five years after Leigh Hunt had completed his terms of imprisonment there for his libel on the Regent. Two years before its destruction, Cremorne Gardens (mentioned by Dickens in this paper), once a noted popular place of entertainment, a short distance west of Battersea Bridge, ceased also to exist, Cremorne Road alone perpetuating its memory.

The allusion to "the Sanctum Sanctorum of *Household Words*," in "The Detective Police," where "the stones of Wellington Street are hot and gritty, and the watermen and hackney-coachmen, at the theatre opposite, are much flushed and aggravated," on a certain sultry evening, is worth noting, because it refers to the office of that publication, at No. 26 Wellington Street, where Dickens had furnished rooms in 1860 and 1867. The Sanctum itself was on the first floor-front with the bay-window so many of us remember, but which has gone with the dead yesterdays. The theatre opposite, which Dickens mentions, was, of course, the Lyceum, which dated from 1834, having been built on the site of the earlier house, whose chief entrance was in the Strand (No. 354), and was once known as the English Opera House.

In "Down with the Tide" we have a description of the

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river seen by the writer from a four-oared Thames Police Galley, which started with the tide from Vauxhall Bridge. Dickens makes Waterloo Bridge tell something of its own story, as thus : “ He had been originally called the Strand Bridge, he informed us, but had received his present name at the suggestion of the proprietors, when Parliament had resolved to vote three hundred thousand pounds for the erection of a monument in honour of the victory. Parliament took the hint (said Waterloo, with the least flavour of misanthropy) and saved the money. Of course the late Duke of Wellington <sup>1</sup> was the first passenger, and of course he paid his penny, and of course a noble lord preserved it evermore. The treadle and index at the toll-house (a most ingenious contrivance for rendering fraud impossible), were invented by Mr Lethbridge, then property-man at Drury Lane Theatre.”

In those days the Thames Police Force, consisting of ninety-eight men, eight duty boats and two supervision boats, had jurisdiction, we learn, from Battersea to Barking Creek. Among the varieties of water thieves known to this body were the Tier-rangers, who dropped along the tiers of shipping, and during the sleep of mates and skippers, went into their cabins and carried off whatever they could ; the Lumpers, or labourers employed to unload vessels, who wore loose canvas jackets, in the capacious pockets of which they could conceal anything they thought worth abstracting ; the Truckers, rather smugglers than thieves, whose part it was to land more considerable parcels of goods than the Lumpers could manage ; and the Dredger-men, who hung about and, as opportunity occurred, threw goods into the river, in order subsequently and privately to dredge them up again for their own purpose.

These and other items of interest did Dickens learn during his journey on the Thames, until he landed at Wapping, “ where the old Thames Police Office is now a station-house,

<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1853 ; the Duke died in the previous year. Not till 1878 was the bridge made free of tolls.

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and where the old Court, with its cabin windows looking on the river, is a quaint charge-room.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an article entitled “The Noble Savage” Dickens refers to “St George’s Gallery, Hyde Park Corner,” where these savages (Zulus) were being exhibited in 1853. This gallery I have been unable to identify ; some of my readers may be luckier in their search.

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